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This ministry focus paper entitled

PREACH ON PURPOSE: A PEER-PREACHING
PLAN TO DISCOVER WHY PREACHERS PREACH

Written by

KARL SCHAFER

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



Clayton J. Schmit



Kurt Fredrickson

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PREACH ON PURPOSE: A PEER-PREACHING
PLAN TO DISCOVER WHY PREACHERS PREACH

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KARL SCHAFER
NOVEMBER 2014

ABSTRACT

Preach on Purpose: A Peer-Preaching Plan to Discover Why Preachers Preach

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Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2014

This doctoral project seeks to improve the preaching of California's southern San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian pastors by guiding them to discover the theological purposes for their preaching. This goal is pursued by creating the framework for a theological, historical, biblical, and contextual ministry seminar and forming the strategy of peer-learning and peer-preaching groups.

While the current trajectory of preaching literature and instruction attends to technical improvements and skill enhancements, this project appeals for preachers to respond theologically to the question: Why do preachers preach? When preachers can articulate theological purposes for their preaching, they will more likely renew their vocational callings to preach and connect with a postmodern, post-Christian, and globally focused population that craves authentic, astute preachers.

The opening part of this project explores the context of preaching, from the national perspective to the local situation, and observes that this network of Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley has yet to address how shifts in twenty-first-century culture impact preaching. The second part of this project surveys the theological and historical landscape of preaching and concludes with biblical and theological themes most pertinent for preaching today. Finally, as a means toward guiding pastors to discover why they preach, a localized strategy is proposed in detail. Committed and culturally sensitive pastors from California's southern San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian congregations will be selected to participate in Preach on Purpose, a three-month peer-learning and peer-preaching ministry seminar. This group will explore biblical, historical, theological, and contextual themes of preaching, discover and define theological purposes for preaching, and then practice and evaluate each other's preaching that incorporates those purposes in peer-preaching groups. Following an evaluation period by participants and leadership, this localized project will inform more widespread future applications of this strategy.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Word Count: 290

To my wife, Kimberly: the best and lifelong partner in ministry
To our children, William and Madeline: Unless my preaching impacts you,
it's not worth preaching

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PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

More than any other event, preaching defines Christian worship. Preaching exists across generations, denominations, traditions, and styles of worship to become the most common feature of Christian worship. Preaching has even played significant roles in shaping historical developments and changes. As preaching historian O. C. Edwards observes, “Most preaching happens in the context of worship and most of the great movements in church history have depended on preaching to accomplish their purposes.”¹ The Christian Church (Protestant and Catholic combined) is also unique among worldwide faith traditions in its emphasis on and devotion to preaching as foundational for corporate worship and individual discipleship. Most churches, regardless of language, location, size, and nationality, include preaching as a fixture in their worship practices. Even given the diverse forms of preaching, each generation’s distinct approach to preaching, and the acculturation preaching undergoes throughout places and times, some form of preaching has always existed—and still exists—in the Church.

Preaching has also long been the express duty of congregational leaders and pastors. The Bible witnesses to the earliest church leaders, such as Peter and Paul, preaching inside and outside of churches (cf. Acts 2:14-26; 3:12-26; 13:16-41), and to the commissioning of pastors, such as Timothy, to preach (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:1-2). As the Church expanded in the first two centuries, pastors and theological leaders assumed the task of preaching, evidenced as early as Origen of Alexandria in the third

¹ O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 18444.

century.² More than two hundred of Origen's sermons are preserved from the last few years of his ministry alone, indicating their influence and importance to his pastoral responsibilities. Over the centuries, bishops, pastors, and preachers became increasingly responsible for preaching in order to educate mostly illiterate populations about the Bible and faith. Through practice and increased attention to preaching, preachers refined their craft, developed resources to define the scope of preaching, and taught others how to preach. By the time of the Reformation, preaching had not only become important to the vocation of pastors; preaching was also becoming the apex of the Protestant worship liturgy. All worship prepared people for preaching and guided people in responding to it. Reformation leaders Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli preached multiple times daily to ensure people accurately understood the faith. By the seventeenth century, preaching had earned a reputation of prominence, apparent in Puritan pastor John Owen's sentiments:

The first and principle duty of a pastor, is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word A man is a pastor unto them whom he feeds by pastoral teaching, and to no more. And he that doth not so feed, is no pastor. Nor is it required only that he preach now and then at his leisure; but that he lay aside all other employments, though lawful, all other duties in the church, as unto such a constant attendance on them, as would divert him from his work, that he give himself unto it, that he be in these things laboring to the utmost of his ability.³

Additional forms and trends in preaching and preachers have continued to emerge in more recent centuries. Preaching at churches and tent revival meetings served as the chief form of spiritual conversion during the First and Second Great Awakenings in

² Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 1296-1472.

³ John Owen, "The True Nature of a Gospel Church and Its Government," in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 20, ed. Thomas Russell (London: Richard Baynes, 1826), 433-434.

America. Even into the twentieth century, the evangelistic preaching of Billy Graham and the rise of the megachurch pastor phenomenon further connected preaching with the pastor.⁴ As pastors have continued to preach over time, the task of preaching has become an essential responsibility of the pastor.

The Pursuit to Improve Preaching

With such widespread and enduring practice, preaching has garnered increasingly extensive discussion and resources over time that seek to improve its quality. There are now institutions that train preachers how to preach, printed collections of historically revered sermons, ongoing publication of practitioners' books for preachers, forums for continued preaching development, and conferences centered on the task of preaching. Myriad online articles, blogs, and opinions flood pastors with quick solutions, educated reflections, and best practices about how to improve their preaching. The vast majority of these resources accentuate techniques, skills, and habits with the goal of rapidly improving preaching. Even with the abundance of assistance presently available to help preachers advance their preaching, a clear response to a foundational question remains largely elusive: What is the purpose of preaching?

For centuries, those who preach have considered what the purpose of preaching is. Preaching has long been understood to be education about spiritual matters. Charlemagne, the ninth-century emperor, saw preaching as “the chief means to give religious instruction in a basically illiterate society.”⁵ The uneducated majority in

⁴ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 17232-17587.

⁵ Joseph H. Lynch, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History* (London: Longman, 1992), 76.

Charlemagne's day would have been unable to access or understand the Christian faith without people telling them about it, and preachers adapted to that situation. To the extent that Christian leaders have recognized the battle between good and evil in the world, they have seen preaching play a central role in that battle. Saint Augustine claimed that the preacher's task is, "To teach the good and extirpate the evil,"⁶ and sixteenth-century Puritan leader William Perkins summarized, "Preaching has a twofold value: (1) It is instrumental in gathering the church and bringing together all of the elect; (2) It drives away the wolves from the folds of the Lord."⁷ As Protestant leaders of the Reformation split with the Catholic Church, they saw preaching as articulating theological positions. The Reformation leader John Calvin stated: "Wherever the Word of God is sincerely preached and listened to and wherever the sacraments are instituted according to Christ's institution, we can be sure the Church of God exists."⁸ Just as the Great Awakenings in America emphasized personal salvation from sin, preaching in this time focused on salvation. The seventeenth-century Father of Pietism, Philip Jacob Spener, affirmed, "Preaching should be the divine means to save the people."⁹ Jonathan Edwards claimed that the one great goal in preaching is "impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men."¹⁰ More general sentiments about preaching arose in the past two

⁶ Saint Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robinson, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), book 4, para 6.

⁷ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996), 5.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 4.1.9.

⁹ Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore Tappert, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1952), 116.

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Smith, (New Haven: Yale, 1959), 115.

centuries. The main duty of preaching, according to American Baptist pastor John Broadus in 1891 is, “The proclamation of God’s message through a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity.”¹¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, renowned Congregational pastor and orator Silvester Horne claimed that “mankind lives and grows on great sermons.”¹² Quite recently, American theologian Walter Brueggemann affirmed the importance of narrative preaching: “The purpose of the sermon is to provide a world in which the congregation can live.”¹³ A distinctively missionary mentality comes through Welsh theologian C. H. Dodd’s definition of preaching: “The public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world.”¹⁴ My own tradition of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (hereafter, PC(USA)) affirms that preaching is one of the six greatest goals of the Church and is esteemed as “the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of humankind.”¹⁵ That Reformed theological understanding of proclamation even heightens preaching to be the actual spoken Word of God to hearers.

These diverse perspectives about what is the purpose of preaching reveal both the complexity and the necessity of the question. A single, succinct, timeless, and universal purpose for preaching may not exist due to the variety of ministry contexts, people who preach, and cultural characteristics. The purpose for preaching in one place and time may

¹¹ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1898), 3.

¹² Charles Silvester Horne, *The Romance of Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914), 29.

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 97.

¹⁴ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 7.

¹⁵ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2011), G-1.0200.

differ to some extent from that in another place and time. One preacher's preference may feature one purpose over another. The evolving function of congregations in their contexts and the ways they minister can further evolve the purpose of preaching. Yet, the critical attention given to preaching in every age of the Church reveals that although a single purpose may not exist, a set of purposes for preaching may exist. Furthermore, because of the importance, universality, and prominence of preaching in the ministry of worldwide congregations, purposes for preaching must be pursued. If preaching is so intrinsic to the ministry of the Church, then leaders and pastors must work at defining and articulating its purposes.

This doctoral project pursues the purposes for preaching and how they can best guide preachers at improving their preaching. While technical enhancements, historical models, best practices, contextual adaptations, examples of successful preaching abound, few of those methods address the purposes of preaching. It is primarily those purposes for preaching that can guide pastors toward resources for their growth and faithful fulfillment of their callings to ministry. In other words, it is the purposes that inform the practices. For preachers to mature in their craft, preachers must have resources that emphasize not only techniques important to preaching, but primarily purposes for preaching. Skill-based resources only address technical issues in preaching; purpose-based resources can address adaptive issues in preaching.¹⁶ Such adaptive resources are particularly important in the changing twenty-first-century American Church context, as will be evidenced in the following section and Chapter 1.

¹⁶ Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, "The Work of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review* (December 1, 2001): 5.

The Scope of “Preach on Purpose”

This doctoral project addresses the ministry of Presbyterian pastors and congregations in California’s southern San Joaquin Valley. Until 2006, these congregations were united together denominationally under the PC(USA). Their unity ran deeper still through a presbytery-owned and operated youth camp, joint mission ventures, stable congregations, long-tenure pastors, and shared theological convictions. A specific season of unity began in the late 1990s when these congregations initiated exploring the changing place of churches in society and the emerging missional church movement. Together, pastors and elders dedicated extensive time to studying these topics and eventually reorienting many of their congregations to adopt an increasingly missional view, even sponsoring robust community engaging ministries, local and global missions programs, multi-church partnership covenants, and creative ministry initiatives beyond their campuses. These church leaders attended to major issues such as racial-ethnic demographic shifts and local congregations’ connections to an increasingly global faith.

At the same time, these elders and pastors continued to worship together and they each continued leading worship in their own congregations, acts that always involved preaching. Their unity around Reformed theology has helped keep preaching as a prominent part of these congregations’ worship and ministry. The preachers of these congregations, furthermore, have mostly been trained in Reformed seminary settings that emphasize preaching and its significance in worship, and these pastors spend extensive time preparing to preach sermons. All of these factors contribute to the priority of preaching in these churches.

Despite, however, the shared values among these congregations about both missional innovation and preaching as essential to worship, preaching has rarely received attention, study, discussion, and innovation comparable to the other ministries of these congregations and the presbytery as a whole. In fact, improvement and innovation in preaching was largely left to the individual preachers. This resulted in less adaptation in preaching when compared with other ministries in these congregations.

While much work remained in the area of improving preaching according to missional theology and cultural changes, these churches experienced substantial denominational fragmentation. Many congregations in the Presbytery of San Joaquin began to leave the PC(USA) and affiliate with other Reformed denominations in the early 2000s because of controversial theological and polity decisions at the national level. Between 2006 and 2013, nearly half the congregations in the presbytery, which comprised over half of the presbytery's membership, peaceably ceased their affiliations with the PC(USA).¹⁷ Despite these denominational changes, however, many congregations, pastors, and church members remain connected through geography, shared mission commitments, and personal relationships. Their decades-long partnerships in ministry have kept many of them connected even when many of their denominational affiliations have changed. It is these pastors—once unified as PC(USA) pastors but now in various Presbyterian denominations—whom this doctoral project refers to as a network of Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley.

¹⁷ Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of San Joaquin, *Congregations and Missions Yearbook* (Visalia, CA: Presbytery of San Joaquin, 2006 and 2013).

In response to these two realities—a lack of attention to and innovation in preaching, and denominational fragmentation of congregations and pastors who remain connected together—this project seeks to equip preaching pastors of these Presbyterian congregations in California’s southern San Joaquin Valley to improve their preaching. Such improvement will be pursued by guiding pastors to discover the theological purposes for their preaching. The focus of this project stands in contrast to the majority of current preaching literature, which attends to skills and techniques such as sermon development, planning efficiency, oratory improvement, and skill enrichment. This current focus has a strong historical basis, even since the beginnings of preaching in the Greco-Roman world when those who preached appealed to popular techniques of their day.¹⁸ For the first preachers, they looked to rhetoric and oratory. Edwards observes that the result has been “many different kinds of preaching in history, and they were all probably related to what was going on in the society in which they arose. . . . These movements all draw on contemporary standards of what makes public speaking effective, and tastes in that have at times changed rapidly.”¹⁹ Such a quest for the newest skills to improve preaching continues today in what homiletician Jana Childers describes as the “wrapper” or “presentation” or “dressing” of preaching.²⁰ Yet, these accessories to preaching fall short of impacting the fundamentals of preaching. Just as Childers favors ways of improving preaching more thorough than skills and techniques, this doctoral

¹⁸ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 18476.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jana Childers, *Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Childers, 2004), Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 617.

project focuses on purposes for preaching as a means toward leading pastors to improve at preaching. Such purposes may eventually guide preachers toward pursuing certain skills and techniques for preaching that are most relevant to achieving the purposes for preaching that they discover. Yet, it is the focus of this project to guide pastors in discovering the purposes for which they preach as a primary avenue to improving their preaching.

Toward this end of discovering the purposes for preaching, this project appeals to pastors to respond theologically to the question, Why do preachers preach? It is the theological purposes behind preaching that can drive preachers to improve in their preaching, motivate them to learn about their contexts, and inspire them to renew their spiritual and vocational callings. With clear and thoughtful theological purposes in hand, these preachers are likely to connect better with their postmodern, post-Christian population who crave authentic, astute, and relevant preachers.²¹ This project outlines a three-month preaching seminar for working pastors that seeks to guide them in discovering why preachers preach. The seminar is entitled Preach on Purpose. Participants in the pilot group for the Preach on Purpose ministry seminar will come from the network of Presbyterian pastors in the southern San Joaquin Valley. They will be invited to join together in a peer-preaching group where they will seek to discover the theological purposes for their preaching.²² Participating preachers will accomplish this by

²¹David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church...And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 92-93.

²² Portions of the Preach on Purpose resource will be included as appendices as they relate to sections in Part 3 of this doctoral project. The resource in its entirety, however, will be produced separately from this project.

meeting together three times, fulfill several independent learning exercises, hear from mature preachers, and practice and evaluate each other's preaching based on the purposes for preaching that each pastor determines. Details and a plan of the Preach on Purpose ministry appear in Chapter 4.

I am one of these Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley described above who serves in a congregation that has undergone significant missional transitions and has not seen comparable transitions in preaching. While I have participated in and supported many of the adaptations my congregation and others in my local church network have undergone, I believe preaching in its many and diverse forms must adapt as well. It is my conviction that preaching remains crucial to communicating the dynamics of life for followers of Jesus Christ, prompting a congregation to envision its mission in a biblical context, and motivating a congregation to faithful action as it follows Jesus Christ. This project, therefore, is part of my ongoing effort to grow as a preacher, ensure that my preaching is faithful to God and relevant to my culture, fulfill my call to ministry, and assist the network of congregations where I serve in daring to adapt preaching just as deeply as it has adapted the rest of its ministry. I believe these goals are attainable as we discover together the theological purposes for our preaching.

This doctoral project seeks to improve the preaching of California's San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian preachers by creating a theological, historical, biblical, and contextual resource and form peer-preaching groups that guide them in discovering the theological purposes for their preaching. The opening part of this doctoral project explores the context of preaching, from the national perspective to the local situation, finally tracing the local Presbytery of San Joaquin's situation regarding purposeful

preaching in the southern San Joaquin Valley. This section reveals the reality facing these Reformed congregations: in a post-Christian age, every practice in which churches engage must be re-invented with clear theological purposes. With such theological convictions about preaching, pastors may be poised to preach with theological faithfulness and lasting impact in their contexts.

The second part of this project surveys the theological and historical landscape of preaching and concludes with biblical and theological themes most pertinent for preaching today. The combination of biblical evidence, Church history, and Reformed theology indicates that preaching has always been a prominent part of the Church and that it is purposeful. Yet, the purposes for preaching are rarely specified and even remain elusive to pastors who preach. Theological themes, therefore, for the permanence of preaching are noted and discussed.

The third part of this project organizes a localized strategy as a means toward guiding pastors to discover the purposes for their preaching. Presbyterian pastors from California's southern San Joaquin Valley congregations will be selected to participate in a pilot peer-learning and peer-preaching group. Participants will learn together about their common biblical, historical, theological, and contextual approaches to preaching while observing their specific differences. As a result of presentations by preaching experts, individual study, and guided discussions among participants, participating preachers will be equipped to discover and define theological purposes for their preaching. Preachers will then craft sermons with those purposes in mind and preach to their peer group, followed by evaluations of preaching and refinements to the purposes for preaching that pastors have drafted. This pilot cohort experience will then inform more widespread

future applications of this strategy. A summary of the Preach on Purpose content and conclusions for future discussion and research topics will complete this doctoral project.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF PREACHING

My father grew up in a semi-rural town in the Great Plains of America. Visits to his hometown always included strolling through the downtown area, recollecting the locations of buildings important to my family: my grandfather's printing company, the family-owned furniture store, and the church they attended. Dominating red brick church structures mark nearly every city block and some intersections have three or four churches facing each other. Their solid construction, tall steeples, and manicured gardens overshadow the most popular of businesses and storefronts.

The Ministry Climate in America

Abundant historic church buildings in America hearken back to a recent time when churches were not only at the center of cityscapes, but also at the center of people's lives. The authority of churches and acceptance of Christian theology were rarely questioned and nearly universally accepted throughout America. Churches served as the majority hub of American life, around which people tended to structure their spiritual, social, educational, recreational, and community service pursuits. Because of these culturally accepted practices, churches became numerous, popular, respected, and

supported by the public. The routines of the Church even impacted the schedules of business operations, evidenced by Blue Laws, and people's personal activities as many schools suspended extra-curricular activities on certain weekdays in favor of church ministries. Even as recently as the year 2000, cultural analyst and market researcher for churches, George Barna, observed that churches persisted as the locus of most Americans' spiritual expression.²³ Until just the past decade, the American Church has maintained its centuries-long position, bolstered by a culture that has affirmed the authority and supported the ministry of the institutional church.

The climate of the Church in America, however, is changing. Three prevailing cultural transitions—modernity to postmodernity, localism to globalism, and Christendom to post-Christendom—have profoundly influenced the place and function of the Church in American culture. The following discussion will reveal how these three influences have unseated the Church from its place of authority and pushed it to the periphery. A fourth way of viewing cultural transitions outlines a series of adaptations that the Church in America has made in relationship to its broader culture. A thorough understanding of the major factors impacting the American Church and culture at large gives pastors insight into the changing place of preaching and shape their conclusions about what are the purposes for preaching today.

The shift from modernity to postmodernity is fundamentally the rejection of a single meta-narrative that fits all of life for everyone into a single, thorough

²³ George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2005), 49.

explanation.²⁴ Originally a movement of philosophy and art, postmodernism has expanded to impact a much broader scope of society, including the Church. Whereas modernity situated the Church comfortably within a widely accepted meta-narrative that intertwined the Church, the State, and all of life in a sustainable partnership, postmodernity challenges any singular worldview, and specifically for the present purposes, the place of the Church and faith in relation to the rest of society. The postmodern world acknowledges multiple ways of explaining life and paths to truth, rather than the former appeal in modernity to science and rationalism. The postmodern way further rejects the Enlightenment priorities of rationalism and individualism and affirms instead communal experience, relative truth, and rapid change.²⁵ In rejecting the modern presumptions that knowledge is good, certain, and objective, postmodernists affirm that truth emanates out of community. Truth in the postmodern world is no longer found in the form of information, which is viewed as limited and impersonal; instead, truth in the postmodern world is discovered through personal and communal experience that yields what theologian Stanley Grenz refers to as wisdom.²⁶ Such a shift in terminology helps distinguish the rigid individualism of “truth” from the communal exploration in search of “wisdom.”

Much of what has fueled the rise of postmodernism is an unprecedented global exchange of cultures and ideas. The technology that made possible the Information Age

²⁴ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 90.

²⁵ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 5.

²⁶ Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 167.

increased the pace, quantity, and geography of intersecting information. Along with the rest of society, the Church is impacted by these shifts toward globalism: there is an increasing variety of faith convictions among people throughout the world, people are more aware of the diversity of faith worldwide, and the demographics of Christianity are shifting dramatically. In his in-depth study of global Christianity, Baylor University historian Philip Jenkins defends that the presumptions of a Western-centered, American-focused, and Caucasian-heavy Christianity is in the midst of a reversal.²⁷ Africa, Latin America, and Asia have already outpaced the United States in their number of adherents to the Christian faith, and in the next decade Africa will supersede Europe as the continent comprising the most Christians.²⁸ Just as Christianity in America is aware of and competing with increased numbers of global perspectives, the greatest growth of Christianity is no longer in America, but in other parts of the world. The American Church, therefore, is left to make sense of these unprecedented changes that are decreasing its impact on global faith and its own local faith.

Both the philosophical shift from modernity to postmodernity and the spiritual-sociological shift to a global faith are impacting the place of churches in American society. Whereas the Church of the modern world was at the center of society and influenced other segments of society from this position, the Church of the postmodern world has moved—and is continuing to move—into a more isolated segment of society. Figure 1 depicts this difference between the Church at the center of society to the Church

²⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 2011), 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

as a segment of society. Less and less frequently does public life revolve around the local church; rather, the church is largely relegated to the periphery of society and is no longer a major influence in shaping culture as it has in previous eras. What has replaced the Church at the center of societies in the postmodern world is determined by each person and community.

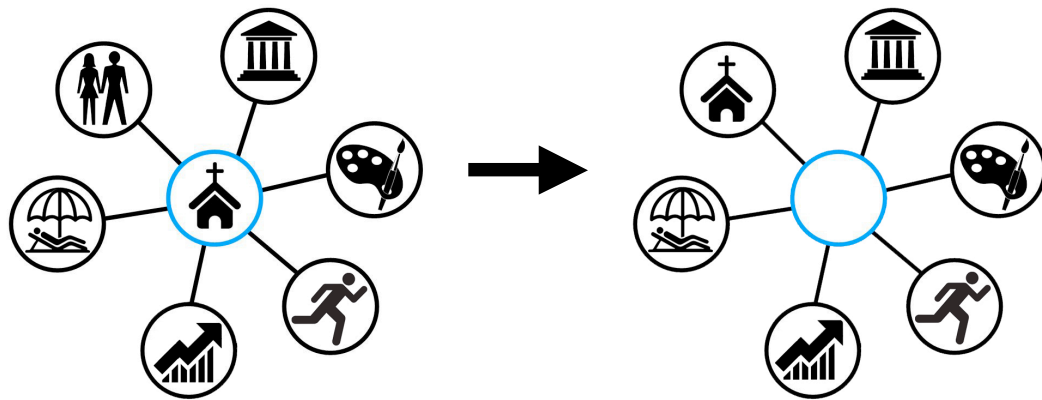


Figure 1 Church transition from center to segment of society

This shift has become commonly referred to by the terminology Christendom and post-Christendom. Ever since the fourth century when Roman Emperor Constantine situated Christianity at the center of society and backed it with official, empire-wide support, the perpetuating partnership between the Church and State became a sociopolitical reality to which the Church grew accustomed. This situation persisted for centuries.²⁹ People assumed that the Church had authority and societies generally respected the Church, its leaders, and its members for their faith. The Church, furthermore, shaped society, its leaders, laws, morals, and public life. The Church

²⁹ Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 6.

continued from generation to generation largely because people were born into a faith lineage rather than volitionally allied with the Christian faith.

Yet, the postmodern influence on individual knowledge versus communal experience and the breakdown of meta-narratives that give universal structure and meaning to life have significantly eroded Christendom.³⁰ The Church's place in society has been shifting for several decades from central to marginal. This new post-Christian era finds that the Church has lost its previous level of esteem in society and its perpetuating membership as new generations are born and are not automatically allying with faith and joining churches.³¹ Furthermore, followers of Jesus are living in a new reality where the Church is no longer at the center of society where it dictates schedules, morals, language, and priorities for the majority of the population. The Church, instead, is becoming one influence among many that shape American culture.

An additional way of understanding the Church's changing position in relation to culture is to note a series of cultural adaptations that have taken place. Pastor and church planter Doug Pagitt observes that the Church has for centuries been in an adaptive relationship with the broader culture.³² When the culture has changed significantly, the Church has adapted to that change. The sociological construct Pagitt presents helps the present-day Church understand past adaptations and those currently underway. Pagitt summarizes the past several hundred years in America by four ages: the Agrarian Age

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jim Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2003), 50-51.

³² Doug Pagitt, *The Church in the Inventive Age* (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2011), 1-7.

marked an agricultural way of life where people worked the land, lived near their place of origin and had limited exposure to the rest of the world; the Industrial Age created a manufacturing and technology shift that attracted people to cities and prized efficiency and productivity; the Information Age developed as people had access to more information than ever before, creating an awareness of and hunger for information; and, finally, the Inventive Age in which knowledge is no longer the goal, but what creative and entrepreneurial things people do with information is the goal.

Pagitt demonstrates how in each age the Church has adapted to the prevailing cultural transition. In the Agrarian Age, the Church adopted a parish model of ministry, largely successful because people remained where they lived and ministry could be done geographically. The Church in the Industrial Age found that through expanded education and access to ideas, larger populations of people could have access to the Bible. To that end, the Church widely disseminated the Bible. In response to the information explosion of the Information Age, the Church contributed curriculum for all ages of people to become biblically educated. Christian education, Bible study groups, and teaching became the way people accessed faith. In the current Inventive Age, Pagitt hesitates to define the Church's adaptations which are currently underway, but forecasts that they will likely include more extensive use of collaboration, entrepreneurialism, and creativity than past ages of Church adaptations.

These four cultural shifts described above (modern to post-modern, local to global, Christendom to post-Christendom, and Agrarian to Inventive) and the series of adaptations made by the Church have broadly impacted the ministry of churches in America. A table summarizing these shifts and their characteristics appears in Appendix

A. Specifically for this project's focus, these shifts have impacted worship, of which preaching is a prominent part. Two overall themes for worship in American churches have emerged through these cultural transitions: "simple to varied" and from "God-focused to human-focused."³³ A liturgical era began during the Enlightenment that sought to consolidate worship patterns across churches. Each new branch of Protestantism that developed after the Reformation crafted its own worship pattern from its distinct theology. These identifiable liturgical styles provided consistency between congregations of a particular denomination. With the onset of post-modernity, however, came a rejection of the meta-narrative (a singular way of explaining life) and affirmation of diverse narratives (many ways of explaining life). Similarly in the Church, people have often found a singular form of worship insufficient to address their individual experiences and out of date when compared with a culture accustomed to and expectant of variety.³⁴

The recent transition in American worship has also been marked by the shift from a God-focused to a human-focused perspective. Since the Enlightenment—and most evident in the postmodern culture—people in Western culture have generally shifted their attention away from external authorities and toward themselves as authorities.³⁵ This has become most apparent in the postmodern age, when authority is decreasingly given to qualified experts or scientific data and increasingly attributed to individual people. The results of this change have deeply impacted the Church's sense of authority in general

³³ James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 142-143.

³⁴ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 184-185.

³⁵ White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 143.

and specifically in settings of worship. The seeker-sensitive trend in the 1990s is exemplary of a dramatic shift in authority. During this decade, a large number of churches in the evangelical world affirmed and oriented themselves toward the preferences of individuals. The Church began re-designing worship services by asking what people in a given context want and need. Worship services adapted to reflect traits of congregations' broader cultures, including emphases on technology, musical style, produced presentations, and positive messages. The philosophy behind these transitions appealed to the comfort and familiarity of the Church rather than the distinctiveness of the Church from the rest of society. As the Church realized that it had been losing its former footing in society, the Church turned to market research and consumer analysis in an effort to attract individuals to worship services and make Jesus appealing to people. This trend toward individual preferences played a large role in shifting the perception of authority in the Church from God to people. Churches were less frequently approaching worship with the sole perspective of God and more frequently with the perspective of how people wanted and felt they needed to worship God.

Notwithstanding the sweeping cultural trends and their impact on the Church in America, the priority of preaching in worship has persevered from the beginnings of America to the present. Although Colonial America provided Protestant Christians with a respite from the political and religious aftermath of Reformation Europe, the American Church began using liturgy and theology from Europe. This liturgy included many of the Reformation's chief emphases, such as biblical literacy and the priesthood of all believers. These characteristics helped defined the Church in America. Over time, these priorities became more pronounced in a newly discovered land where there was more

freedom to expand the Church and re-design faith. Preaching, specifically, found prominence in these churches. As universities were founded in New England, increased literacy, and expanded the rate and depth of learning, preaching came alongside higher education and served as a form of religious education. The relatively new Reformation practice of preaching in the vernacular took root in America, and preachers even found new (Native American) audiences for their preaching. The evangelistic component of the American westward expansion also placed preaching at the center of the ministry venture. The development of the “camp meeting” in the American frontier, for example, emphasized preaching as the main impetus of conversion. Even into the present day, preaching continues to endure prominently in the structure of Protestant worship in America.³⁶

The Ministry Climate in California’s Southern San Joaquin Valley

The broad survey of the national preaching climate finds unique applications in each particular location, including California’s San Joaquin Valley. While California’s overall politically and socially progressive character places the state at the forefront of many national trends, the San Joaquin Valley possesses a different character. Historic and demographic reviews of the area reveal the unique character of this region.

The area comprised by Kern, Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties is referred to as the southern San Joaquin Valley. These four counties comprise the area of the PC(USA)’s Presbytery of San Joaquin and the current network of Presbyterian congregations as described in this project. In this region depicted in Figure 2, many cities

³⁶ White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 160-161.

were founded in the mid-1800s and for reasons distinct from many of the early-founded cities in the rest of the state. Unlike the California mission cities along the coast that were founded as part of Catholic evangelism efforts, San Joaquin Valley cities were founded for the purposes of agriculture, transportation, oil extraction, and natural resource utilization. Geographically, the vast valley is separated from the Pacific coast (west), Southern California (south), Sierra Nevada (east), and Bay Area (north) by mountain ranges, physically creating a sense of independence and seclusion from the rest of the state.

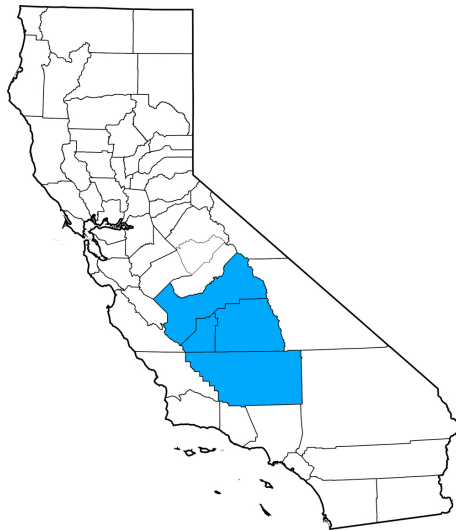


Figure 2 Map of California's San Joaquin Valley

The area of the southern San Joaquin Valley includes approximately 2.35 million people, comprised of a nearly equal majority population (over 90 percent) of Caucasians and Hispanics.³⁷ The remaining minority of the population (less than 10 percent) is a

³⁷ World Media Group, "Fresno County, CA," World Media Group, LLC, <http://www.usa.com/fresno-county-ca.htm>. World Media Group (accessed July 9, 2014); World Media Group, "Kings County, CA," World Media Group, LLC, <http://www.usa.com/kings-county-ca.htm>. World Media Group (accessed July 9, 2014). World Media Group, "Tulare County, CA," World Media Group,

variety of Asian and African-American ethnicities. The overall population of this region has more than doubled since the 1970s.³⁸ Although a majority of the Valley remains politically and religiously conservative, it is becoming more diverse and moderate. Compared with the progressive political and religious trends in the rest of California, the Valley remains more conservative. All four counties of the southern San Joaquin Valley (Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern) are among the top ten counties in California for agricultural production and supply the nation and world with vast amounts of produce and dairy products. The primary industries in this region are agriculture, livestock, forestry, healthcare, education, and natural resource utilization.

Having lived in California all my life, I have personally observed the unique character of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Growing up in Sacramento and traveling throughout the state initially exposed me to the distinct character of the San Joaquin Valley in comparison to the rest of the state. For eight years I lived in the southern Central Coast followed by four years in the Los Angeles metropolitan area before moving to Visalia, located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, eight years ago. I have experienced the San Joaquin Valley as traditional, relational, virtuous, proud, and protective. Even withstanding its rapid population growth in the past several decades, the San Joaquin Valley cities remain relatively small (all cities under population 350,000 except Fresno) and attentive to their heritage. Family values often still rival other social

LLC, <http://www.usa.com/tulare-county-ca.htm>. World Media Group (accessed July 9, 2014). World Media Group, "Kern County, CA," World Media Group, LLC, <http://www.usa.com/kern-county-ca.htm>. World Media Group (accessed July 9, 2014).

³⁸ U. S. Census Bureau, Measuring America: The Decennial Census from 1790 to 2000, accessed July 9, 2014, https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/demographic/decennial_census.html.

agendas. Republicans still outnumber Democrats. The majority of the population still identifies themselves as Christians, particularly as Catholics.³⁹

The demographics of the southern San Joaquin Valley also parallel the region's ministry climate. Demographically, the Valley is more politically conservative, less ethnically diverse, less densely populated, and slower to grow in population than the metropolitan areas of California. In terms of culture and ministry, the Valley tends to experience cultural trends after the larger metropolitan areas in California. The southern San Joaquin Valley is not thoroughly postmodern, not entirely global, and not fully post-Christian. When compared with the progressiveness of the rest of California, this region is experiencing the initial stages of these shifts and is insulated (perhaps temporarily) from their full impact because of the Valley's geography, heritage, growth patterns, and persistent values. The advance awareness of these shifts and the models of how churches elsewhere are navigating them offer helpful resources for churches in the Valley to thrive in addressing these prevalent cultural changes.

The Presbytery of San Joaquin has been aware of the mounting cultural shifts and cognizant of their potential impact on its congregations since the late 1990s. Then-Executive Presbyter Clark Cowden (now a leading voice in the PC(USA) for missional transformation of Reformed congregations) called the Presbytery to collectively pursue a missional ministry trajectory through study, theology, and new ministry development.⁴⁰ Regular Presbytery meetings included worship, group discussion, guest speakers, and

³⁹ World Media Group, "Fresno County, CA." World Media Group, "Kings County, CA." World Media Group, "Tulare County, CA." World Media Group, "Kern County, CA."

⁴⁰ Stated Clerk, *Meeting Minutes* (Visalia, CA: Presbytery of San Joaquin, September, 2003).

testimonials of what was happening in broader culture, the current state of the presbytery, and how churches could adjust to address the future with a missional perspective. The Presbytery, armed with its Reformed heritage and theology, prepared to face the changing culture it scrutinized. The Presbytery even decided to forego its regular meetings for twelve months in 2005 and 2006, which were seen as steeped in a pattern of traditional ministry.⁴¹ It was hoped that this decision would allow time and space to innovate new, creative, and missional ministries.

Among the many results of the overall missional emphasis were that a majority of pastors and elders initiated vibrant discussions about missional ministry in their churches, non-traditional ministries formed, the Presbytery commissioned new ministries to the growing Hispanic population, a Mission Development Team arose and launched new ministries, and the Presbytery pioneered an international refugee ministry. This period evidenced growing unity among the congregations that overshadowed geographical and schedule pressures that challenged congregations remaining united together. What began as unity in asking the same questions about ministry continued as the congregations united by innovating shared ministries.

In addition to coordinating the ministry and mission of the congregations in its region, one of the chief tasks of the presbytery is to gather pastors and elders for worship that reflects the presbytery's collective character. Throughout the period during which missional discussions were taking place throughout this presbytery, the leaders (pastors and elders) worshipped together habitually. The style of worship reflected all of the

⁴¹ Stated Clerk, *Meeting Minutes* (Visalia, CA: Presbytery of San Joaquin, August, 2005).

congregations: traditionally Reformed in liturgy, mostly traditional in musical style, orderly (evidenced by printed orders and advanced planning), prayers related to the local population and the unique issues they face, and often incorporating themes of unity and mission. At each worship service, a pastor from one of the presbytery's churches preached. Similar to the other elements of the worship services, preaching kept with the overall traditional style of the presbytery. This preaching style has been characterized as biblically expository, theologically substantive, thematically missional, and relatively brief (between fifteen and twenty minutes).

After approximately ten years of missional exploration, the presbytery changed in several ways. First, the leadership changed. The Executive Presbyter's departure in 2007 brought in an interim leader, and a series of interim leaders have succeeded, even to the present. Among other results, the temporary sense of leadership has slowed the presbytery's previous momentum toward missional ministry. Second, increasing numbers of congregations in the Presbytery of San Joaquin have left the PC(USA) denomination and affiliated with other Reformed denominations. This loss of congregations contributed to the loss of unity, ideas, finances, leadership, and critical mass of presbytery participants to rally churches to adapt and innovate. The departure of these congregations has also consumed substantial time and focus from the presbytery's leadership to handle the administration of these transitions. Third, the major cultural shifts described above became more pronounced. The political and social character of the Valley incorporated more progressive, postmodern, global, and post-Christian ideas, creating a more diverse climate of ministry. Without the availability of leadership to continue leading the presbytery through addressing the current cultural shifts, and without the enduring

resources to innovate, the presbytery has not kept the same pace in adapting in light of the cultural shifts. The presbytery continues to lose congregations today, has lost over two thirds of its congregations' worshipers due to changed denominational affiliations, and struggles to garner the kind of missional unity that once characterized the presbytery in the previous decade.

The Preaching Climate in Presbytery of San Joaquin Congregations

Despite the lack of unity and missional emphasis at the presbytery level, preaching persists in all of the presbytery's congregations and in the previously PC(USA) congregations who have affiliated with other denominations. The Presbytery of San Joaquin also still insists on gathering its pastors and elders for worship, and the cornerstone of those worship services continues to be preaching, just as Reformed liturgies suggest. Preaching in the network of Presbyterian congregations in the southern San Joaquin Valley is not disappearing. But, preaching has neither adapted nor fundamentally changed with the pace of culture. Furthermore, preaching has not been a dominant subject of discussion among pastors and church leaders throughout the region in adapting to the cultural shifts increasingly happening in Valley churches. The Presbytery's concern during this season has been its changing identity and which ministries to continue and discontinue, as well as several creative discussions about new ministries rising up within the presbytery. Similarly, even during the past decade's season of presbytery-wide unity, the presbytery rarely addressed preaching. Numerous other facets of churches and ministries, however, were addressed, such as multi-ethnic ministry, local and global missions, youth and children's ministries, and multi-church and

cross-cultural partnerships. Regardless of the ministry season, the topic of preaching has not been a concerted emphasis of the presbytery. Despite all of the cultural shifts happening nationally and locally, as well as the transition of leadership and character of the presbytery, development and improvement in preaching has become the responsibility of the pastor, largely independent from the presbytery.

Within the network of Presbyterian pastors and congregations in this region, there remains a strong affirmation of Reformed theology and the responsibility to fulfill the task of preaching. John Calvin's theology greatly shapes how these congregations perceive the place of preaching. Particularly formative and often quoted among pastors in this network of Presbyterian congregations is Calvin's declaration in *Institutes*:

"Wherever the Word of God is sincerely preached and listened to and wherever the sacraments are instituted according to Christ's institution, we can be sure the Church of God exists."⁴² For the PC(USA) congregations, preaching also sits prominently as the first of the six Great Ends of the Church in its constitution and this text is often repeated among these congregations as they gather as a Presbytery: "The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind."⁴³ The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (hereafter, EPC) maintains its own affirmation that preaching remains as one of the Church's powers given by Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ The Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (hereafter, ECO) has not yet drafted its complete theological position

⁴² Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.9.

⁴³ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order*, G-1.0200.

⁴⁴ Evangelical Presbyterian Church, *Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church* (Mountain View, CA: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2013), 3-1.

document. All three Presbyterian denominations that southern San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian congregations ally with rely on the *Book of Confessions* for their theology and this anthology repeatedly affirms the priority of preaching. For example, the Scot's Confession asserts that preaching is the first of the evidences of the true Church,⁴⁵ the Heidelberg Catechism claims that preaching is the method by which faith originates in people,⁴⁶ and the Second Helvetic Confession affirms that the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.⁴⁷ Not only do these documents exist as part of these congregations' theology, history, and constitutions, but these writings are often referenced in discussions among pastors and elders. Despite the consensus that preaching is a priority, the network of congregations has not assisted pastors in improving their practice of this principal task.

With such historic underpinnings, preaching will continue to remain an integral part of the worship ministry of the congregations of this network. The dilemma, therefore, for these Presbyterian congregations is not the priority of preaching: Preaching already holds a strong and enduring theological and liturgical priority in the ministry of these congregations. The problem is one of inattention: The network of churches in the southern San Joaquin Valley has not yet helped pastors navigate how best to adapt preaching in light of the recent cultural shifts impacting churches. While pastors partner together under certain agendas, they do not participate together in improving as

⁴⁵ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1996), "Scot's Confession," ch. XVIII.

⁴⁶ *Book of Confessions*, "Heidelberg Catechism," Q65.

⁴⁷ *Book of Confessions*, "Second Helvetic Confession," ch. 1.

preachers. As a result of the inattention to preaching, many preachers have not attended to the purposes for their preaching. If these pastors fall short of developing as preachers, they further risk being relevant and effective in their immediate and future ministry. Without sufficient attention given to the role, function, and place of preaching in an increasingly postmodern, global, post-Christian, and Inventive culture, this network of pastors and churches may jeopardize their impact.

The goal of the present project is to improve the preaching of California's southern San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian preachers by creating a theological, historical, biblical, and contextual resource that informs peer-learning and peer-preaching groups of preachers in discovering the theological purposes for their preaching. As pastors learn, study, discuss, preach, and evaluate preaching together, it is hoped that they will also renew their senses of call to the ministry of preaching.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE OF PREACHING

The literary landscape of preaching is vast. Volumes focus on numerous facets, such as analyzing the preaching task, surveying preaching across generations and centuries, collecting sermons from revered preachers, offering tips and tools for preaching, and overcoming preaching challenges with how-to manuals. The past several decades, however, have seen a marked increase in preaching publications. The vast majority of recent literature focuses on improving the production and techniques of preaching. Many of the current bestselling books are collections of award-winning sermons, strategies for preaching, or books detailing how to preach.⁴⁸ Even still, there is a minority of publications that explore why preachers preach as a means to guide pastors to improve in their preaching. This literature, which gives attention to the purposes for preaching, is the focus of the current literature review. Resources from the Reformed tradition that are relevant to the present, postmodern timeframe are of particular interest to this doctoral project. Summaries follow below of six preaching resources that present

⁴⁸ Findings are based on a search for preaching resources at the online distributor ChristianBook.com and sorted by bestsellers. ChristianBook.com, <http://www.christianbook.com>. (accessed May 5, 2014).

diverse perspectives and insightful background to address the question central to this project: What are the purposes for preaching?

The Place of Preaching – Resource #1

In his thoroughgoing work, *A History of Preaching*, O. C. Edwards provides a broad context for preaching through a detailed survey of the origins, development, character, priorities, and adaptations in preaching ever since the identifiable beginning of preaching. Edwards admits that his purpose is not to judge between good and bad or right and wrong preaching. Instead, he acts as a homiletical historian, tracing the growth of preaching through the ages and pointing out its milestones along the way. Particularly useful for this project's task is that Edwards writes as if he is searching for what preaching is, which is closely tied to the purpose of preaching. Beginning with the fragments of preaching included in the New Testament, Edwards proceeds by searching through each major epoch of the Church to find distinct developments in preaching. Edwards also describes the influence of Jewish synagogue worship and Greco-Roman rhetoric on the formation of Christian preaching across centuries of development. In tracing the evolution of preaching, Edwards observes that the twelfth century French theologian Alan of Lille gives what is considered to be the first formal definition of preaching: "Preaching is an open and public instruction in faith and behavior, whose purpose is the forming of [persons]." ⁴⁹ Through many additional milestone innovations in preaching Edwards shows how preaching has changed greatly over time and how cultural conditions have affected deeply the character of preaching in each age.

⁴⁹ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 4315.

Edwards' work is particularly helpful for the twenty-first-century preacher and for this project's task of guiding pastors to discover the purposes for their preaching in several ways. First, Edwards reminds preachers that there are many ways to preach. In his review of 2,100 years of preaching history, the examples Edwards cites demonstrate a remarkably broad diversity of people permitted to preach and manners of preaching. While certain seasons—such as the Middle Ages and Renaissance—only permitted highly educated and ordained people to preach, other times—such as American Colonialism and international missions in the twentieth century—welcomed anyone willing to take the gospel to unreached people groups. Edwards cites preaching that falls across wide spectrums of style: from prepared to spontaneous, from academic to practical, and from dull to passionate.

Second, given the sweeping cultural changes the Church in America is facing in the twenty-first century and the questions these changes raise for preaching, Edwards offers comfort that preaching has endured—and even thrived—in many times of cultural uncertainty and political unrest. He observes, for example, that when the Early Church was widely persecuted, preaching soon became endorsed by a new national leader, Emperor Constantine. By giving the Church—and, therefore, preaching—permission and authority throughout the broader culture, Constantine set in motion centuries of unparalleled establishment and growth for the Church. Edwards also notes that not long after the rise of humanism during the early Renaissance, the Reformation launched the Church on a new and uncharted course where preaching again held high esteem in the Church and even across broader society.

Third, Edwards cites a vast array of historical, theological, and even personal perspectives that preachers have used in approaching the task of preaching. When viewed across two millennia as Edwards presents, preaching becomes an adaptable practice that is shaped by the distinct situations and priorities of each generation. The academic, political, personal, miraculous, spiritual, and sociological influences in preaching appear so inconsistent throughout history that Edwards is left at the end of his book with few universal themes to conclude, other than the reality that preaching is important.⁵⁰

Fourth, Edwards notes the trend that each generation of preachers finds faults in the previous generation's preaching and it attempts to correct them. Regardless how faithful preachers of any time period attempted to be and how diligently preachers pursued what appeared to be the most faithful purposes and practices of preaching, each age of preaching will be modified for the next age. Even the present styles and approaches to preaching in the Church in America, in all their diversity, will one day be viewed as incorrect, unbalanced, or inaccurate. Still, the current perspectives on preaching are distinct and temporary and will in some way shape the preaching that is to come.

Defining Preaching – Resource #2

Essential to understanding the purpose of preaching is accurately describing what preaching is. Thomas Long assumes that task in his second edition of *The Witness of Preaching*. Accounting for the variety of common and previous descriptions of who the preacher is, such as herald, pastor, and storyteller/poet, Long appeals to the image of

⁵⁰ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 18417.

“witness” to most accurately describe preachers.⁵¹ Beginning with biblical imagery and Jesus’ commissioning of His followers to be witnesses, Long applies the description of a witness to authority, the Bible, rhetoric, observation, and preaching setting. For the author, this image expands the preacher’s notion of him/herself as a thoughtful, calculating, engaged, and driven participant along with the congregation in the task of following and communicating Jesus Christ. In articulating what preaching is, Long essentially describes the purpose of preaching: to bear witness to Jesus Christ. Long takes the image of “preacher as witness” further by describing the two responsibilities of a witness: to be a witness and to bear witness.⁵² Connected to the purposes for preaching, Long affirms that the preacher is personally involved in preaching by hearing God’s Word for a congregation and vocationally involved by speaking that Word to that congregation. Much of the remainder of Long’s book proposes a process that a preacher must engage in to bear witness faithfully to Christ. Long suggests such specifics as biblical exegesis, a process for exegesis, the focus and function of a sermon, and components of a sermon as ways of fulfilling the preacher’s calling as witness.

The greatest value Long lends to the present project’s task is his articulation of preaching as witness and how this image relates to the purposes for preaching. The process that Long suggests for shaping preaching based on this image can be insightful as an example for the network of preachers in this pilot project to see how a thoroughly biblical image and purpose for preaching can affect the practice of preaching. This

⁵¹ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 45.

⁵² Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 99-100.

perspective on preaching has the potential to expand the vision and inspire the practice of preaching that preachers discover during the Preach on Purpose ministry seminar described in Part 3 of this project. Long's concept of witness also overlaps with other recent theological uses of this image, such as Darrell Guder's *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*.⁵³ When combined together, both Long and Guder can contribute to a theological foundation on which preachers can construct purposes for preaching and enact those purposes when they preach.

Expanding the Purposes for Preaching – Resource #3

In search of the purpose for preaching, homiletician Jana Childers compiled reflections from ten notable preachers on that topic. Childers's anthology, *The Purposes of Preaching*, prompts preachers to consider multiple purposes for preaching and creative ways of approaching the event of preaching. While Childers' own reflection on preaching that appears as a chapter in the anthology is brief, she does reveal her own perspective on preaching. For Childers, the purpose of preaching is found in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and she uses the incarnation as a model for preaching. Childers views preaching as an incarnational process in which the sermon is born out of the preacher's interaction with God, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ That divine creative development process, according to Childers, awakens a response in both the preacher and the listener that is, itself, an incarnational activity.⁵⁵

⁵³ Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), chapter 3.

⁵⁴ Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 599-609.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 590.

Contributors to Childers' anthology offer their own varied reflections about the purposes of preaching, such as preaching as conversation, building up the faith community, forming and sending people, redeeming faith language, meeting a fundamental human need for religious responses to life, and disrupting people so the Holy Spirit can work. This diversity reveals the difficulty and depth of the question about purposes for preaching. Many of the contributors in Childers' anthology also acknowledge the challenge of naming a purpose of preaching. Some admit that the purpose of preaching has changed for them throughout their lives while others conclude that preaching is such a broad task that there must be more than one purpose for preaching. Although no single purpose of preaching emerges, the reflections contained in Childers' work reveal two common conclusions: First, preaching takes a lifetime of exploration and practice, and second, there must be more purposes than a single, universal purpose for preaching.

The contributors to Childers' anthology offer a more theological and philosophical approach to the purposes for preaching as compared to the technique-heavy guides that remain prevalent today.⁵⁶ Several of the contributors suggest implications for their ideas, such as how the preacher ought to read the Bible or approach sermon preparation based on the purpose of preaching he/she promotes. The rarity of this type of specific and technical response, however, leaves room for the preacher to form unique sermon production patterns based on the purposes outlined. Although quite academic in

⁵⁶ Many of the bestselling books on preaching are overwhelmingly technique- and skill-based guides to preaching. Some examples from the Amazon.com best-selling books on preaching include: *Communicating for a Change*; *Reading for Preaching*; *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*.

language and style, this resource is particularly helpful in encouraging a broader set of perspectives about the purposes of preaching. The frequent use of biblical texts by most contributors is also a helpful example for preachers in this project's pilot group to see ways that the Bible can inform their discovery of purposes for preaching.

Preaching Today in the post-Christian Age – Resource #4

While preaching has received extensive attention in literature, distinctively missional preaching is only beginning to be explored. In his brief book published in 2008 entitled *Choosing the Kingdom: Missional Preaching for the Household of God*, seminary professor and Episcopal priest John Addison Dally acknowledges that amidst the unprecedented changes that are impacting the Church today, nobody knows what preaching will become as it adapts. Yet, Dally is direct about what tools will not allow preaching to endure in the new frontier of the Church: practitioner's resources are ineffective and only offer a quick fix with the hope of immediate success. Instead, Dally concludes about preaching, "We don't need to improve our product. We need to change our minds."⁵⁷ Dally refers to several mind changes necessary for a re-imagining of the preacher's role in a missional culture.

First, Dally discards the notion of the preacher as an expert who informs people about and persuades people to follow Jesus. Instead, he affirms the viewpoint of the preacher as a follower of Jesus who is sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Such a thorough rethinking of the preaching ministry delves deeper than methods and practice and points toward the purposes that lay at the foundation of preaching. Dally proceeds to

⁵⁷ John Addison Dally, *Choosing the Kingdom: Missional Preaching for the Household of God* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 15.

challenge the preacher's sense of purpose and identity in preaching, how the preacher views the congregation's place in relationship to the sermon, and the criteria preachers use to measure a sermon's effectiveness. Short of scripting a detailed formula for how to preach missionally in an increasingly post-Christian context, Dally offers a framework to challenge traditional sermon structure. Dally advocates adapting the popular progression of "exegesis – illustration – application" to "proclamation – implication – invitation."⁵⁸ Dally is clear to emphasize that his goal is not to offer a simple change for preaching, but to introduce a new and thorough way of understanding preaching.

Second, Dally calls preachers to preach about the Kingdom of God, just as Jesus did. After the author's journey through the Gospels that identifies what the Kingdom of God is, Dally defends that just as this was Jesus' foundation for ministry it ought to be the preacher's foundation for preaching. Dally, therefore, encourages preachers to invest themselves in the same exercise through the Gospels to recapture what the Kingdom of God is and discover its place in a preacher's ministry of proclamation. Dally affirms that focusing on the Kingdom of God orients preaching back to confronting congregations "with the *krisis* of God's reign breaking into human history and demanding a response of faith and allegiance."⁵⁹

Dally's work is pioneering in the area of specifically missional preaching. As such, he spends appropriate time exploring and describing what missional preaching can be. Although his volume is helpful to the present task of recapturing the purposes for preaching, Dally's work is brief. Additional resources in the arena of missional preaching

⁵⁸ Ibid., 113-121.

⁵⁹ Dally, *Choosing the Kingdom*, 14.

will be helpful as they become available to supplement Dally and provide further perspectives as missional theology progresses.

Preaching Today in the Post-Christian Age – Resource #5

Communicating in laymen's terms, pastor and church planter Doug Pagitt practices and advocates a non-traditional (and quite missional) way of understanding preaching. In 2005, Pagitt published *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*,⁶⁰ and since revised this volume into *Preaching in the Inventive Age*. Pagitt's primary contention is that preaching has become confined to a single mode of communication that is too limited to capture fully the Bible's description for preaching. "Proclaiming the Gospel," Pagitt says, "does not mean unarguable one-way communication."⁶¹ Instead, Pagitt advocates that "preaching is the act of people being led more deeply into the story of God."⁶² Pagitt encourages preachers to move away from solely practicing a "speeching" model (one-way communication from speaker to listener) for preaching, which has dominated preaching since the Enlightenment. This, Pagitt argues, is by itself untenable as a means of forming followers of Christ.⁶³

Using historical, ecclesiological, biblical, and cultural examples, Pagitt encourages sermon-writers to move more often toward what he calls "progressional dialogue," or back-and-forth conversations that allow people to engage in weighing

⁶⁰ Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁶¹ Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 21.

⁶² Ibid., 151.

⁶³ Ibid., 161.

biblical truth with the events of their lives. Pagitt often qualifies and balances his exhortation: It is not the speech-form of sermons altogether that he resists, but the long-term habit of preaching as speech-making that Pagitt believes is dangerous to people's understanding of their role in their own faith formation. Along these lines, Pagitt sees preachers not as the sole authorities or even as gifted teachers, but as "the conduits that allow the people of the church to interact with, learn from, and be remade by the whole community of faith."⁶⁴

Pagitt's thorough description of the progressional dialogue preaching model and his theology behind it focus much of the book on "how preachers preach." Yet, Pagitt is clear that his convictions about how preachers preach are founded in why preachers preach. "The whole point of preaching," Pagitt states, "is to help people grow in their understanding of God and how we are to live as God's people and to empower the church to live out God's mission." That purpose for preaching is not in question, largely because of Pagitt's view about the centrality of the priesthood of the believer in preaching. This doctrine, for Pagitt, releases the preacher of sole authority in the church and increases the value of all followers of Christ. Pagitt imagines preaching environments where "having people contribute is not an interruption to what we are doing but an addition to who we are becoming."⁶⁵

Pagitt recognizes the severity of the shift in preaching he encourages. To that end, he includes numerous chapters considering related practical topics from both theological and contextual perspectives. Throughout his pragmatic and technical outline of moving

⁶⁴ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 170.

toward progressional dialogue, Pagitt consistently returns to the reasoning behind a move away from speech-making. In these frequent instances, Pagitt refers back to why preachers preach. For Pagitt personally, it is the grand purposes behind preaching—helping people grow in Christ, empowering the church to follow Christ and serve the world—that prompt him to discover and practice the most faithful and effective ways of preaching, while helping other pastors do the same.

Pagitt's proposal of progressional dialogue as a non-traditional way of preaching is uniquely helpful to this doctoral project's plan. Preachers seeking to discover the purposes for their preaching need ideas about preaching such as Pagitt's, which are rooted in theological convictions and formed from the major American cultural shifts. Pagitt encourages preachers to see the extent to which preaching can be re-invented. While not everyone will agree with Pagitt, they will be exposed to creative ways of adapting preaching for the current culture and preaching based on identified purposes.

Preaching in Transition – Resource #6

It is nearly unanimous among church leaders in the twenty-first century that the Church is in transition. The cultural shifts in progress during the past several decades as outlined in Chapter 1 create a culture for the Church in which there is an unclear future and where the Church is rethinking many forms of ministry. Church planter and ecclesialogist David Fitch challenges how much the American Church is willing to change. In *The Great Giveaway*, Fitch proposes that to the extent that the Church

structures itself on a modern world perspective, the Church will be ineffective.⁶⁶ Fitch applies this perspective to preaching, concluding that preachers must radically change their perspectives and practices in order to accommodate the new culture in which they find themselves ministering.

Fitch guides preachers in being appropriately critical of preaching. While Fitch sees that preachers who hold a modern worldview emphasize exegetical and biblical preaching, he also argues that a modernist preacher is content to be one who just “preaches the Word.” Fitch concludes that this perspective overlooks—or “gives away”—several inherent aspects of preaching. Three aspects that Fitch highlights are a communal interpretation of Scripture, narrative-based preaching, and faithful hearing of the entire Word of God. As a corrective, Fitch offers suggestions for ways to remedy the problems he finds in modernist preaching, which he sees as prevalent. Without stating it as such, Fitch implies his own purpose for preaching: to lead the Church to personally encounter and directly experience God.

Although Fitch’s reflections on preaching comprise only one chapter of his book, they are nonetheless helpful contributions to the topic about the purposes for preaching. Fitch is convinced that the Church is currently not doing its best at fulfilling the purposes God has for preaching in this generation. Fitch’s dissatisfaction with preaching and his vision for a better understanding and practice of preaching can inspire preachers to rethink their own preaching ministries. The attention Fitch gives to narrative and spiritual approaches to preaching help preachers attempting to adapt their preaching see how

⁶⁶ David E. Fitch, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 17.

preaching might better connect with a postmodern culture, which emphasizes stories and affirms personal searches for truth.

CHAPTER 3

WHY PREACH? A THEOLOGY OF PURPOSEFUL PREACHING

Discovering purposes for preaching begins with a solid theology of preaching. Ample studies of God's role through the act of preaching exist and highlight the breadth of biblical and historical material that contributes to theology of preaching. This chapter begins with an overview of the biblical witness to preaching. The greater part of this chapter will concentrate on the theology directly relevant to this project's goal of helping preachers discern purposes for their preaching. This will be accomplished by discussing three areas that combine to form a theology of preaching: biblical models for preaching, historical emphases on preaching, and the present culture of preaching. The chapter will conclude with a summary of findings related to a theology of preaching.

Overview of the Biblical Witness to Preaching

A theology of preaching finds its starting point with the biblical witness to preaching and mandate to preach. The New Testament refers to preaching in over one hundred instances, predominantly in the form of two Greek words. The general term

kerysso (proclaim, herald) refers to public proclamation of a message⁶⁷ while the more specific term *euangelizo* (announce the good news) is usually followed by an object of what is announced.⁶⁸ The words are sometimes used interchangeably and even paired together in the New Testament to describe a range of communication activities (cf. Romans 16:25; Galatians 2:2; Colossians 1:23). The English word “preach” also finds Greek antecedents in verbs that elsewhere are translated “to make known,” “to portray,” “to bear witness,” “to testify,” and “to teach.” This variety of “preaching” that the New Testament depicts makes difficult a precise definition of what preaching is or how preaching is enacted.⁶⁹ What is conclusive from how these two most common Greek words for preaching (*kerysso* and *euangelizo*) are used and their contexts, however, is a pair of themes. First, there is a wide diversity of people who fulfill the act of preaching. John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve disciples, people whom Jesus heals, Paul, and others preach or are charged to preach. Second, preaching in the New Testament is a common activity intended to communicate a specific message: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition to recording, characterizing, and describing preaching, the New Testament reveals impetuses that stimulated Jesus’ followers to preach. These impetuses are essential to a theology of preaching because they highlight the role of God in preaching and suggest intentions God has for preaching. Five impetuses are noted here with a brief expansion of each. First, people preached because God called them to preach

⁶⁷ Fredrick William Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 543-544.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 402.

⁶⁹ See Fred B. Craddock, “Preaching” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 451-454.

(cf. Luke 3:2; Galatians 1:15-16, 2:7). For example, once John the Baptist received a message from God, he immediately went preaching a specific message of repentance and forgiveness. Similarly, Paul grounds his ministry to the Galatians in God's call before Paul was born to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, people preached because Jesus preached (cf. Mark 6:6b). The disciples and others preach by following the example of preaching that Jesus established. Jesus' habit of preaching served as the model on which others based their preaching. Third, the disciples preached because Jesus charged them to preach (cf. Luke 9:2, 6). Jesus empowered them with specific abilities and charged them with specific instructions and purposes: "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing" (Luke 9:2).⁷⁰ Fourth, the disciples preached because Jesus commissioned them to preach (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). This commissioning was distinct from the previous charge in that Jesus now would no longer preach, but was passing on the responsibility to preach to the disciples. Fifth, people preached because their faith and experience compelled them to preach (cf. 1 John 1:1-4). In 1 John, the disciple claims that it was his and his community's experience of seeing and hearing Jesus that drove them to proclaim the message of Jesus. These biblical examples of impetuses for preaching indicate a common reason why preachers preach: They are prompted by an encounter with God or Jesus Christ. In some way—whether explicitly through a divine verbal command or implicitly through spiritual and personal discernment—those encounters with God or Jesus Christ sent people to preach, and God's intention for that

⁷⁰ All Scripture referenced is from the New American Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

preaching was to fulfill the encounters people had with God by preaching about their encounter and the truth about God that they discovered.

Biblical Models of Preaching

In addition to the biblical witness to impetuses that drove people to preach, the bible also reveals the ways in which people preached. In pursuit of a theology of preaching, it is essential to examine these biblical models of preaching. The New Testament notes numerous instances and records many examples of preaching in the ministry of Jesus, the early formation of the church, and the letters of Paul and Peter. This project will focus on two occasions when preaching is the explicit subject and when the discussion contributes to purposes for preaching. While preaching resources for pastors often use biblical models of preaching as examples of *how* preachers preach, this project will use biblical models to probe *why* preachers preach. Paul's description of his own preaching as demonstrating Spiritual power and not presenting persuasive wisdom (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5) and Paul's charge to Timothy to preach (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-5) offer insights into the purposes behind preaching. Analysis of each model will involve exegetical, historical, and contextual reviews, all contributing to this chapter's theology of preaching and, ultimately, providing the biblical background to assist pastors in discovering purposes for their preaching.

Before unpacking these models and passages, it should be noted that the biblical record of preaching is much debated. Most scholars doubt that the speeches in Acts or the examples of preaching in the New Testament letters are complete transcripts. Instead, the consensus among scholars is that the Bible's references to and examples of preaching are

excerpts or summaries of longer sermons that were in fact given.⁷¹ In pursuing purposes for preaching, it is not necessary to engage in this debate, but to be aware of it. Since the preaching models reviewed in this chapter are not examples of preaching whose authenticity are widely debated, this project will not discuss such arguments. Still, pastors exploring the biblical witness to preaching must be familiar with the debates surrounding the integrity and historical accuracy of preaching in the New Testament. Such awareness will assist pastors in being discerning about the lessons they glean from the overall biblical witness to preaching.

Biblical Model #1: Paul's Self-Description of Preaching

The first preaching model on which this project will concentrate is Paul's description of his manner, style, and motivation of preaching to the Corinthian church.

The apostle summarizes his approach to preaching:

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Both explicitly and implicitly, Paul reveals five characteristics and intentions of his own preaching. These will be noted and examined individually, and then evaluated collectively for their contribution to a theology of preaching.

Paul first notes the style of his preaching: He “did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom . . . not in persuasive words of wisdom” (1 Corinthians 2:1, 4). The

⁷¹ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 603.

Greek rhetorical culture in which Paul lived prized those very characteristics of eloquent speech and persuasive wisdom. Undoubtedly, Paul's Jewish education and training equipped him to be adept at such speaking devices. Thus, when taking into account Paul's background, status in the Jewish system, former respect by peers, and rhetorical ability, the humility and irony of Paul's statement are unmistakable. That Paul regularly endeavored to communicate with reason, clarity, and logic is evident through his writing of New Testament letters and the existent examples of preaching.⁷² Paul's vocabulary, grammar, writing structure, and reasoning—even in the whole of 1 Corinthians—are particularly complex and give evidence of someone well-versed in literary communication.⁷³ In describing his deficient communication style to the Corinthians, therefore, Paul does not insist that he is less capable, has simplified his message, or underplayed his abilities in preaching to the Corinthians. Paul has no intention of distinguishing himself by his own speaking style or persuasion techniques.⁷⁴ Instead, by rejecting cultural rhetorical norms and suspending his own reputation, Paul hopes to minimize his own presentation and maximize the gospel's presentation.⁷⁵

This presentation—the content of Paul's preaching—is the second characteristic of Paul's preaching to the Corinthians. Paul “determined to know nothing among [the Corinthians] except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). If Paul intends

⁷² Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 208.

⁷³ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 58.

⁷⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 92.

⁷⁵ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 208.

to diminish the style of his presentation in favor of emphasizing the content of his presentation, then the most important aspect of Paul's preaching is the content: Jesus Christ crucified. Certainly, Paul could speak fluently on a variety of topics concerning philosophy, Judaism, faith, and Scripture. In his preaching, however, Paul declares his standard that the message of his preaching must be unmistakable. This emphasis on preaching Jesus Christ was not unique to the Corinthian church, but common to the remainder of Paul's ministry.⁷⁶ New Testament scholar Anthony Thiselton affirms that Paul's "settled resolve was that he would do only what served the gospel of Christ crucified, regardless of people's expectations or seductive shortcuts to success, most of all the seduction of self-advertisement."⁷⁷ It is the content Paul preaches that is Paul's priority in his preaching.

The content of Paul's preaching then finds application in relationships. Although Paul's priority in preaching is to communicate a particular message, the message is latent until it contacts people who need to hear it. Paul knows people in Corinth who need the message he has to share because he has cultivated relationships with them. Paul reveals this third characteristic of his preaching—relationships—when he writes, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). The relationships that Paul cultivated with the Corinthians indicate his practice of vulnerability and value of relationships where preaching is involved. Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church appears to involve openness about his circumstances, evidenced by the weakness, fear, and trembling that Paul admits to experiencing among them. A person protective of

⁷⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 92.

⁷⁷ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 212.

his status and concerned about his reputation would rarely act so vulnerably as to reveal such personal limitations. Instead, notes New Testament scholar Gordon Fee, “It is a condition which he is gladly willing that the Corinthians should now recall, so that they will be reminded of how unlike the sophists his preaching and appearance truly were.”⁷⁸ It is unlikely that Paul’s mention of weakness, fear, and trembling refer to either apprehensiveness about sharing the gospel or being accepted as an orator. After all, Paul is quite direct in articulating the gospel and content being distinct from the expert orators often appreciated in that setting. It is more likely that Paul is physically suffering or impaired in some way.⁷⁹ However the verse is construed, it is sufficient for the purposes of this project to note that Paul built some level of relationships with the people to whom he preached and these relationships influenced his preaching.

Knowing his audience as he did, Paul notes that he strategically employs a method for his preaching. This method is a fourth characteristic of Paul’s preaching. In contrast to the method of the popular rhetoricians who used “persuasive words of wisdom,” Paul’s method is to deliver a message and preach in ways that are “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Related to Paul’s earlier contrast between his own preaching style and that of his contemporary philosophers, Paul’s method in preaching is to demonstrate not his own prowess, but the Spirit’s power. This method also reiterates Paul’s emphasis in the content of his preaching: Just as Paul determines only to make Jesus Christ known and not himself, Paul intends to demonstrate

⁷⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 94.

⁷⁹ See Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 213-215, for a more complete array of possible meanings and interpretations of 1 Cor 2:3.

the Spirit's power and not his own ability. It may appear that through repetition of similar contrasts, Paul excessively dramatizes the difference between himself as a messenger of Jesus Christ and the orators of his day. The significance of rhetoric in Paul's Greco-Roman culture, however, cannot be underestimated. The expectations of orators and the competition among them were fierce, requiring any public speaker—preachers included—to employ the laws of rhetoric to win an audience's attention and allegiance.⁸⁰ Paul's articulation of his preaching method, which appeals to the power of the Spirit, is nothing short of a "renunciation of the status of rhetorician."⁸¹ Paul firmly relies on the power of the Spirit to fulfill the orator's role in delivering proof.

Paul concludes this description of his own preaching by articulating the goal of preaching. In this instance with the Corinthian Church, Paul's goal in preaching is "that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5). Consistent with Paul's previous interest in minimizing himself in favor of maximizing Jesus Christ, Paul aims his preaching toward the Corinthians' faith solidly resting in God rather than in anyone or anything else. By making this distinction between human wisdom and God's power, Paul widens the gap between what the Corinthians currently rely on and what Paul is leading them to discover. The wisdom they regularly encounter in the rhetorical games and oratorical contests is no match for the power of God.⁸² Paul maintains that this is the goal of his preaching.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 218, 220.

⁸¹ Ibid., 220.

⁸² Thiselton offers a further conjecture that God's wisdom "speaks to the heart as well as to the mind and creates a new reality" in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 223.

While these five characteristics with which Paul describes his preaching to the Corinthian church relate to Paul's address to that congregation and setting, these characteristics also make at least two contributions to an enduring theology of preaching. First, nearly all of Paul's preaching characteristics underscore that God is of greater importance and the preacher is of lesser importance. Paul claims that his speaking style, preaching content, method, and goal all point attention away from the preacher, the preacher's ability, and the preacher's wisdom. On the contrary, those traits point toward God and God's power. As Paul asserts, the preacher's speaking style is only a tool, the content of the message and the method point beyond themselves, and the goal keeps the preacher fixed beyond him/herself. In discussing Paul's theology of preaching, Blomberg observes that "the preacher as herald stands in a vulnerable position. Preaching is thus a weak medium both in content and form."⁸³ This set of convictions is reminiscent of John the Baptist claiming that "[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). Paul insists that the preacher is a messenger, directing the listener through both the preacher and the message, toward the power of God. In highlighting this distinction between an emphasis on God and an emphasis on the preacher, Paul hints at a purpose for preaching: so that people encounter and are changed by God.⁸⁴

The second contribution Paul's reflections on preaching make to a theology of preaching involves relationships. For Paul, the relationships he establishes with the Corinthians and the way he invests in those relationships amplify the importance of relationships in preaching. While Paul certainly preached at times to people he did not

⁸³ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 58-59.

⁸⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 97.

know, Paul indicates his personal dedication to the people to whom he preaches. The more Paul knew about and endured with his audience, the more points of connection he was able to make when preaching about the power of Jesus.

Biblical Model #2: Paul's Charge to Preach

The second model to which this project will give attention is Paul's charge to Timothy to assume the leadership and preaching role in the church at Ephesus. While the entire letter of 2 Timothy serves as a sort of charge to a new leader, chapter four concentrates directly on Timothy's task of preaching:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Four distinct features of preaching comprise Paul's charge. These will be noted and examined individually, and then evaluated collectively for their contribution to a theology of preaching.

The first feature of preaching contained in Paul's charge is preaching's importance. Paul begins his charge to Timothy with language that points to the gravity of the preaching task. Instead of simply writing, "I charge you . . .," Paul prefaces his charge with three distinct layers of seriousness. First, Paul charges Timothy "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 4:1). Instead of being an isolated transition from one leader to another, Paul sees this change as commissioning a new leader to a calling, which involves God and Jesus Christ. Paul affirms that the new calling, Timothy's new

role, and the leadership transition occur in the presence of God and Christ Jesus. While this viewpoint may be assumed for a ministry vocation, Paul stating it implies that this event receives God's blessing and he requests God's favor in it.⁸⁵ Adding a second layer of intensity to the event, Paul clarifies that Jesus "is to judge the living and the dead" (1 Corinthians 4:1). While Jesus' role as judge is not new information to Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy of Jesus as judge to elevate the urgency of preaching.⁸⁶ If Jesus is to judge the living and the dead, then Timothy has work to do through preaching that helps people encounter the power of God and Jesus, which in turn might save them from death and restore them to life. Paul's third layer of preface to the charge is to give motivation to preach based on the new reality that Jesus is bringing. In addition to proclaiming the coming judgment of Jesus, Paul sees the task of preaching as anticipating Jesus' kingdom. For Paul, this kingdom is a real, tangible, promised, and sure event that inspires him. Paul believes it can also inspire Timothy.⁸⁷

The second feature of preaching described in Paul's charge concerns what to preach. Paul simply says, "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). Based on Paul's other uses of this same word in 2 Timothy, the "word" may refer to the "word of God" (2 Timothy 2:9) or the "word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15),⁸⁸ the literal words of Scripture (2 Timothy

⁸⁵ George W. Knight. *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 451-452.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 452.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 452-453.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 453.

3:15),⁸⁹ or what Timothy has learned about Christ and faith in general (cf. 2 Timothy 3:14). If Paul, by using *logos* (word) to describe Timothy's teaching, has in mind the Greek philosophical notion of *logos* as the source of life, the contrast becomes all the more stark. As is evident in other Epistles and the Gospel of John, the *logos* was the source of logic and wisdom that the Greeks in general, and the Gnostics in particular, pursued. Yet, the charge Timothy receives is to preach a distinct *logos*. If Paul has in mind those things that Timothy learned and that influenced him, Timothy's "word" is a word loaded with personal conviction and experience. Regardless what Paul specifically had in mind by "word," some amount of solemnity and passion lie behind Paul's charge, indicating the importance of what Timothy is to preach.

Paul defines a third feature of preaching when he outlines the goals of preaching to the Ephesian church where Timothy is to serve. Paul urges Timothy to "be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). More than heralding, announcing, or proclaiming, Timothy is to preach with a goal. Paul is aware of the heresies in the Ephesian church and, therefore, charges Timothy to correct those heresies by preaching. Paul urges Timothy to preach whether it seems timely or untimely (in season and out of season), to preach in response to false ideas (reproof), to preach against bad thought or action (rebuke), and to preach to affirm good thought or action (exhort). This series of commands may suggest a particular progression or formula for Timothy to correct or encourage faithfulness through

⁸⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2000), 572.

preaching, or it may more generally instruct Timothy to preach boldly regardless of the situation.⁹⁰

Paul urges Timothy to establish such a readiness and determination about preaching because he foresees that people will become deaf to preaching. This final feature of Paul's charge to Timothy to preach demonstrates the reality that preachers of broad cultures, times, training, and ability face: what to do when the preached message does not appear to penetrate people. Paul is likely already seeing the beginning of a time when the Ephesians "will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Paul nowhere implies causation between Timothy's preaching and the Ephesians' deafness. Rather, Paul states the inevitability of people prone to ideas that fascinate their longings and tempt their desires. For Timothy the preacher, his responsibility in the face of such a situation is to persistently preach. Paul commands Timothy: "But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). In complete contrast to the fickle hearers Paul has just described, Timothy's preaching is to be "sober," or persistent and resolute. The commands that follow all make the same point (perseverance)⁹¹ and act like summaries to the entire preceding charge.⁹² Whatever the situation Timothy encounters—timely or untimely, receptive or unreceptive, needing rebuke or exhortation—Paul presses Timothy to fulfill

⁹⁰ Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 454.

⁹¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 576.

⁹² Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 456-457.

the charge with the strength of God and Jesus, who Paul understands are present and supply the necessary strength.

The features of preaching that comprise Paul's charge to Timothy also make two additional contributions to this project's theology of preaching. First, for preaching to persist in any situation, preachers must be convinced of their callings to preach. Paul emphasizes that Timothy will face personal hardship, deafness to his preaching, rejection, and competition. To balance out such challenges, Paul solemnly charges Timothy to preach by drawing on the presence of God and Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1), his future hope in Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1), and the ministry calling in which Timothy is already engaged (cf. 2 Timothy 4:5). Had Paul not been convinced of the power of God and Jesus and these admonitions, he would not have charged Timothy with them. Paul's exhortation to persevere is founded in his own conviction about fulfilling a calling to preach based on Jesus' power.

The second piece of Paul's charge that contributes to a theology of preaching is that preaching is both urgent and useful. Just as Paul exhorted Timothy to preach on opportune and inopportune occasions, preaching must continue because the power in preaching does not come from situations or preachers, but the Spirit's power. Paul emphasized this same conviction in the previous preaching model found in 1 Corinthians 2. Whether the occasion appears right or wrong to the preacher is irrelevant; the result of preaching is entirely dependent on God. The preacher's task, then, is to preach urgently a useful message, which is essentially "the word" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Historical Emphases on Preaching

A solid theology of preaching grounds the act of preaching in biblical models and traces its development throughout the generations of the Church. Having unpacked two biblical models of preaching that contribute to the purposes for preaching, this project moves to discuss two historical periods with especially strong emphases on preaching. The first period of interest is the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of the High Middle Ages when preaching saw a dramatic resurgence and the creation of a distinctly new style of preaching. The second period of interest is the sixteenth century Reformation and its theological and liturgical attention to preaching that situated preaching at the apex of Reformed worship.

Historical Emphasis #1: Preaching in the High Middle Ages

The High Middle Ages, roughly marked by the years 1000CE to 1300CE, witnessed a dramatic change both in culture and in preaching. During the early part of the High Middle Ages, culture was generally rural, stagnant, and uneducated, and preaching reflected a similar character. Having received limited education, the majority of clergy in rural regions of the Empire recited sermons authored by bishops with higher training, Church Fathers, and respected past preachers.⁹³ Although this practice created consistency in religious instruction and accountability for preachers spread across vast areas, it inspired neither innovation nor distinctive style. Religious reforms in clergy status, education, and training leading into the eleventh century created increasingly severe separation between an already divided clergy and laity. While the authority and

⁹³ Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 76.

education of the clergy increased, those of the laity decreased. The effect on preaching was that sermons became more common and complex, often becoming less accessible and understandable to the rural laity.

In the thirteenth century, however, both culture and preaching dramatically changed. Society moved away from stagnation as it began to experience economic expansion, population growth, farming innovation, universities forming, and information proliferation. People became more interconnected and interdependent, resulting in expanded education, innovation, and exploration. Cities began to rise up as people moved away from rural areas to these new centers of resources and education. With more people and money, numerous churches were constructed in this period. Consequently, a new church leadership structure emerged to oversee the expansion of congregations with the creation of friars. Whereas the previously cloistered and ascetic model of ministry proved inadequate to address the changing culture, these new friars were more educated than the rural clergy and they were trained to minister in the urban centers where the people were tending to migrate.⁹⁴ These friars even identified new audiences for their ministry: Not only did the friars take responsibility for a congregation, but for the public community.⁹⁵ Religious innovations continued and expanded training and resources for religious leaders that equipped them for the new urban ministry context.

The friars, however, were not the only preachers new to the leadership landscape. The twelfth century observed a renewed and widespread fervor among followers of Jesus to go and preach. Stemming from the New Testament example of Jesus sending the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 191.

⁹⁵ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 5033.

apostles to preach, followers of Jesus in the High Middle Ages also emphasized taking the gospel to their communities. Numerous untrained but eager lay people assumed this calling by becoming traveling preachers. The extent of this itinerant preaching is revealed in the creation of organized religious movements, such as the Cistercians and Cathars, which continued for centuries. While itinerant preachers delivered sermons across broad areas, their preaching was not always as accurate as the preaching of better trained preachers, which drew criticism from the established church leaders and authorities. Certain groups of wandering preachers even earned the title of “heretics” because of their cavalier approach to biblical and theological accuracy. In these various ways both sanctioned and unsanctioned by the Church’s leadership, the gospel of Jesus spread to new areas.

Out of these cultural and ministerial changes came a milestone shift in preaching that O. C. Edwards describes as an “explosion” and an “outburst.”⁹⁶ Both the disciplined and educated friars and the spontaneous and fervent itinerant preachers contributed to this influx in preaching. Edwards observes that, “Seldom in the history of the church has there been such a rapid and widespread increase in the amount of preaching along with a corresponding proliferation of interest in preaching as that which began early in the thirteenth century and continued through the fourteenth.” In addition to being more prolific and well-received, this era of preaching coalesced into a new style of preaching. In contrast to the previous generation that tended toward homily that explained a biblical passage and related it to people’s lives, preaching of the thirteenth century was

⁹⁶ Ibid., Location 5033. This conclusion is also made by Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 191.

distinctively artistic, scholastic, and thematic.⁹⁷ Sermons in this new age connected biblical passages to themes that were then explored with the insights of the passage. Preachers employed more originality and creativity in forming sermons made possible by preaching aids and resources never before available, as well as by the availability of new audiences and contexts.

The milestone changes in preaching during the High Middle Ages make several contributions to this project's theology of preaching. First, it is unlikely that a single form of preaching is adequate to proclaim the Christian faith to people of every age.⁹⁸ Preaching, therefore, must adapt appropriately at various times. Changes in how churches minister often happen only when dramatic changes in culture prompt churches to change. The High Middle Ages was one of those times of both cultural and ecclesiastical change. Edwards notes that the distinctive style of preaching that developed during this period "was the medium through which the church responded to the crisis of the time and the new urban masses of the High Middle Ages had their commitment to the Christian faith reinforced."⁹⁹ Although effective during that time, the artistic and thematic style of preaching would one day prove less effective and be replaced by another style.

The second contribution of this period to a theology of preaching is what theologian James J. Murphy called "the first formal definition of preaching in the 1,200-year history of the church."¹⁰⁰ In the late twelfth century, French theologian Alan of Lille

⁹⁷ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 5144-5182.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Location 5034.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Location 5513.

¹⁰⁰ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 307.

wrote, “Preaching is an open and public instruction in faith and behavior, whose purpose is the forming of [persons]; it derives from the path of reason and from the fountainhead of ‘authorities’.”¹⁰¹ Alan’s definition is noteworthy because he is thought to be the first to articulate what preaching is, how sermons are formed, and what the purpose for preaching is. Additionally, Alan considers a purpose for preaching beyond the thoughts common in his day, which centered on education. By contrast, his definition proved more holistic, naming the impact preaching might have on the whole person.

Historical Emphasis #2: The Reformed Place of Preaching

Perhaps the most robust conclusions about preaching came from the Reformers, several of whom advocated that preaching was in fact God speaking through a person. In addition to the many political, social, and theological implications of the Reformation, the Reformation was a time of great revival in preaching. As a result of the growth of preaching in the late Middle Ages and the widespread dissatisfaction with the Catholic expression and administration of faith, the Reformers took advantage of this time of dramatic change in the Church to continue expanding the practice of preaching, giving it a significantly new function and character.¹⁰²

During the two hundred years between the High Middle Ages and the Reformation, the European world endured multiple crises that affected the Church. First, the economic, demographic, cultural, and educational boom of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries proved unsustainable, resulting in financial depression and political malaise.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 4315.

¹⁰² James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 29.

Second, the Black Death plague of the fourteenth century claimed as victims approximately one third of the European population. Simply by death, the Church lost numerous faithful participants. Third, and most significant for the Church, people grew disillusioned with the papal bureaucracy replete with financial overspending and inattention to serving the laity. When combined together, these three crises caused diminished financial resources for the Church, decreased attendees at churches, and a culture of anti-clericalism. The Church was in its own crisis: Many people remained fervent about their faith but became disillusioned with the structures and authorities of the Church.¹⁰³

Despite the criticism directed toward the Church, the practice of faith persisted and gave rise to new and varied approaches to thinking about Christianity in the two centuries preceding the Reformation. The Renaissance of the fourteenth century turned society in new directions, such as toward intellectualism, scientific discovery, and new forms of creative expression. This freedom from previously established forms of thought combined with the current anti-clerical dissatisfaction to create further discouragement with the prevailing religious institutions. Drawing on the scholastic notions of continuity between faith and reason, fourteenth-century philosophers revived explorations into theology with the use of logic and critical observation. Theologians such as John Wycliffe and John Huss publicly criticized the pope for claiming authority over Scripture and argued that Scripture be restored to its proper authority in guiding Christian living. The growth of humanism in the fifteenth century and its value of rationality and critical

¹⁰³ Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 338.

thinking over established doctrines of faith furthered the Renaissance rebirth of faith. This period of intellectual discovery began evaluating the previously unquestioned practices and authorities of the Church and inspired revival in how people lived out the Christian faith. Movements and leaders such as these first fueled a political reformation, followed by the theological Reformation. During that theological Reformation, the matter of preaching came into new scrutiny.

From some of the most prominent theologians' writings and documents published during the Reformation came striking comments about what preaching is and the purposes for preaching. More so than in earlier periods, these comments intertwined a developing sense of theology with the task of preaching. Martin Luther claimed, "Tis a right excellent thing, that every honest pastor's and preacher's mouth is Christ's mouth, and his word and forgiveness is Christ's word and forgiveness For the office is not the pastor's or preacher's but God's; and the Word which he preacheth is likewise not the pastor's and preacher's but God's."¹⁰⁴ Similarly, during a sermon on 1 Timothy 3:2, John Calvin preached, "When a man has climbed up into the pulpit . . . it is [so] that God may speak to us by the mouth of a man."¹⁰⁵ Convinced of the power of preaching and the responsibility to preach, Calvin reflected in a letter to Lord Somerset, the Duke of Somerset, England, about the goal of preaching: "The people must be taught in such a manner that they may be inwardly convinced, and made to feel the truth I say this to

¹⁰⁴ Martin Luther, as quoted in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I:1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 107.

¹⁰⁵ John Calvin, as quoted in T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 24.

your highness, because there is too little of living preaching in your kingdom.”¹⁰⁶

Likeminded conclusions appear in the Swiss Second Helvetic Confession of the 1560s by Reformer Heinrich Bullinger: “The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful.”¹⁰⁷

This tone of confidence and conviction about preaching reflected the Reformation’s two chief contributions to a theology of preaching. First, Reformers honed their belief that the preached word is God’s word. As the Reformers criticized and gradually tore down the political and ecclesiastical authorities, they appealed to Scripture to construct a new way of understanding and authorizing preaching. In contrast to the previous age when the Church placed authority in edicts, laws, princes, and governments, the Reformers appealed to God through Scripture. Calvin claimed that, “God will make His dominion known by the spiritual sword of His Word, proclaimed by His ministers and preachers.”¹⁰⁸ Reformers worked to change where authority in faith was held. Both Scripture and the preacher now replaced the pope and ecclesiastical authorities. In summarizing the impact of the Reformation, Horne concludes, “These Reformation fathers believed absolutely in the power of the preached word.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ John Calvin, as quoted in Philip Vollmer, *John Calvin, Theologian, Preacher, Educator, Statesman*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1909), 123, Google eBook.

¹⁰⁷ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Confessions*, “Second Helvetic Confession”, 93-94.

¹⁰⁸ John Calvin, as quoted in Paul Emil Henry, *The Life and Times of John Calvin: The Great Reformer*, vol. 1, 434, Google eBook.

¹⁰⁹ Horne, *The Romance of Preaching*, 182.

The second contribution of the Reformation to a theology of preaching was the scope of preaching's impact. Grounded in the belief that the preached word is God's Word, Reformers saw preaching as not only for the purpose of educating the faithful, but impacting the general public. In particular, preaching became the means to educate people about the Bible and inform people about faith. By equipping the laity in these ways, preaching played a significant role in garnering support for what eventually became an overthrow of the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities. The audiences for preaching, therefore, were not only congregations who needed spiritual affirmation and growth, but the public who needed another way of understanding the Church's place in society. Calvin, in particular, determined that churches existed for the purpose of transforming cities. Consequently, as preaching became the central part of worship in churches during the Reformation, preaching became focused on impacting cities. Horne summarizes such a viewpoint, concluding that Reformation preachers served as "supreme examples of the power which the man of the Gospel can exercise in shaping the civic and national life of free peoples."¹¹⁰

Present Culture of Preaching

The preceding historical survey of preaching demonstrates that preaching has continually adapted to its larger cultural context and has come to serve distinct purposes within each setting. The present American culture of preaching evidences similar influences and reactions. The review in Chapter 1 of recent cultural shifts in America revealed two transitions relative to preaching: The preaching context has moved from

¹¹⁰ Horne, *The Romance of Preaching*, 189.

“simple to varied” and from “God-focused to human-focused.” This section will build on these two themes and the historical milestones of preaching just reviewed to describe a more detailed picture of the present American cultural context and its influence on a theology of preaching.

The dramatic cultural changes of the 1960s that characterized the beginning of postmodernism spurred a desperate reaction among preachers. This period saw the public decrease its trust of traditional authorities and increase its reliance on personal experience. In characterizing the beginning of the postmodern period in the 1960s, O. C. Edwards observes that pastors reacted to their culture in several ways that broadly affected preaching.

In the anxious uncertainty that characterized this period, there was also widespread disease among clergy about the effectiveness of preaching. At first there was a despair of preaching’s capacity to make any difference in people’s lives. Then followed a series of efforts to discover new ways of going about the task of Christian proclamation, ways that would have integrity and might elicit a hearing in the new world in which clergy found themselves.¹¹¹

The reaction that gained influence came to be known as the New Homiletic, which began as criticism of the previous century of preaching since the late 1800s and elicited motivation to explore new ways of preaching. Shaped by the work of pastor and preaching professor Fred Craddock, the New Homiletic observed that preaching as the presentation of biblical content and conclusions, termed the Deductive Method, no longer connected with an emerging postmodern culture that wanted to experience the quest for biblical understanding. The resulting theological move was to see preaching as an inductive exploration that viewed congregations as participants. The developing

¹¹¹ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 17784.

perspectives of the New Homiletic were many, several of which include: preaching must be listener-focused rather than speaker-focused; the practical application of preaching must take precedence over the biblical proposition; preaching must be an event or an experience when the listener encounters God.

Overall, the dominant assertion of the New Homiletic into the twenty-first century was “sermon as experience.”¹¹² As the New Homiletic evolved over several decades, it inspired an experiential form of preaching that sought to draw hearers into the story of God. Narrative preaching, which predominantly viewed the Bible as a grand story, invited followers of God to personally and actively participate in that story through study and self-discovery. In so doing, narrative preaching provided for the participatory and experiential characteristics of the postmodern culture. This approach to preaching, furthermore, helped develop the sermon as an experience and an event in which people personally encounter God.

Envisioning the next adaptation in preaching, British pastor David Hilborn tempered the experiential emphasis in preaching and pointed to preaching that would become less focused on investigation and study: “My suspicion is that to be effective in the postmodern world, evangelical preachers will need much less to show people the expository wheels going round. The exegetical apparatus will still be necessary, but it will function less as the framework of the sermon and more as its scaffolding. It will have to be removed from view before the sermon is preached.”¹¹³ Following the attention of

¹¹² Scott M. Gibson, “Critique of the New Homiletic” *PreachingToday.com* (August 25, 2005), accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2005/august/129--gibson.html>.

¹¹³ David Hilborn, *Picking Up the Pieces* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), 60.

the New Homiletic to how congregations heard and responded to the sermon came a theological shift that again re-shaped preaching with an emphasis on the listener's experience.

In the late twentieth century, the New Homiletic intersected with missional theology, triggering yet another movement in preaching. Central to missional theology is the *missio dei* (mission of God) and missional theology advocates elevated this theme that is common among the Gospel writers and sought to make it central to the twenty-first-century ministry of churches. Widely regarded as one of the founding members of missional theology, Darrell Guder summarized,

We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. 'Mission' means 'sending,' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history We have begun to see that the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness God's mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves.¹¹⁴

The principal idea of missional theology—that the Church exists for the purpose of being sent by God on the mission of God—has since shaped worship, and even preaching.

Pastor and preaching professor Clayton Schmit contributes to the emerging theology of missional preaching in his practical worship manual designed for missional congregations.¹¹⁵ Grounding his suggestions in the theological and liturgical context of the twenty-first century, Schmit demonstrates how a timeless pattern for Christian

¹¹⁴ Darrell L. Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4-5.

¹¹⁵ Clayton J. Schmit, *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

worship parallels the current missional sense of worship through the liturgical sequence of call, gather, Word/sacrament, and send. It is this fourth phase of worship—send—which is the leading emphasis of the missional culture and on which Schmit focuses his suggestions for worship. Most notable for preaching, Schmit offers five principles for the task of preaching in a missional age, beginning with this introduction: “There are many things that pass for preaching today, and not all of them can be considered proclamation of God’s word.”¹¹⁶ Schmit further clarifies the kind of preaching fit for missional congregations: preaching that is textual (biblical), contextual (grounded in time and place), theological (God-focused), directed to the mind (clear and logical), and directed to the heart (interesting and appealing).¹¹⁷ This approach to preaching balances many of the preaching emphases since the Reformation, such as theological integrity in the Reformation, biblical exposition in the New Homiletic, and personal experience in the postmodern age. Furthermore, Schmit’s concept of preaching targets both the hearer’s mind through information and the heart through appeal, providing content and inspiration as motivation to send people as participants in God’s mission.

Missional theology is the last broad trend impacting the present American culture of preaching. In fact, missional theology has yet to have a lasting impact on preaching. While several volumes have begun to explore what missional preaching means, much exploration and practice remains to be done in this area.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 181.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 180-183.

Toward a Theology of Preaching

A theology of preaching is foundational to inform purposes for preaching. To the extent that such a theology of preaching emerges from the previous biblical, historical, theological, and contextual perspectives, several conclusions follow about a theology of preaching that inform purposes for preaching.

First, the essence of faithful preaching lies not in a particular style of preaching, but in fulfilling God's call to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Preachers throughout Church history have developed diverse forms of preaching with specific goals in reaction to their cultures. As Craddock observes,

In the histories of both synagogue and church, preaching as a mode of communication has ranged from an informal discussion called homily to a carefully constructed speech following the instructions of ancient rhetoric. The words which can be translated "preaching" in the biblical texts, however, do not yield much clear information on the mode or modes of communication.¹¹⁸

Yet, something deeper than the form or manner of preaching drove biblical preachers to preach, as discussed previously with the two models of preaching. Similarly, the Reformation period revealed that preaching is bigger than the preacher, indicating that God's larger power and purpose lie behind the preacher's preaching.

Second, preaching is a people-centered pursuit. At the risk of oversimplifying the subject, preaching must be done by a person to other people; preaching cannot exist without people giving and receiving preaching. More nuanced are the biblical and historical values of relationships between the preacher and congregation, the impact of preaching on a community of believers, and the influence preaching can have on

¹¹⁸ Craddock, "Preaching", 451-453.

changing a city. The spectrum of people (in terms of education, social status, age, background, among other demographics) who are given the task of preaching, furthermore, confirms the vast array of people who are essential to the preaching enterprise.

Third, preaching is shaped by culture. Not only is preaching a sacred calling, it is also a cultural practice. Biblical, theological, and historical examples validate that preaching has benefited when it allows culture to shape it in certain ways. Cultural shifts necessitate a different form of preaching, and at many times the Church has adapted. In nearly every age, culture has influenced what form preaching takes. Consequently, when the Church or broader culture is in the midst of transition, the Church has given extensive consideration to what adaptations are appropriate for preaching while remaining faithful to the purposes for preaching.

Fourth, preaching communicates a divine message. The biblical record, particularly from the writings of Paul, is repetitive and adamant that the message to be preached by preachers is simply the message and person of Jesus Christ. However varied the styles of preaching that appear throughout history and however different the words of the gospel sound, the message to be preached remains a divine message of transformation for the believer, churches, and secular community.

A theology of preaching can equip pastors to discover and define purposes for preaching. Yet, these purposes continue to remain elusive and unnamed, even for those who most often consider the discipline of preaching. Jana Childers, in her collection of views on purposes for preaching, summarizes her thoughts on the challenge of preaching with clear purpose when those purposes are largely unclear. “A clear sense of what we

are trying to achieve in the world would, at the very least, be helpful. Yet, many preachers seem to be reticent about declaring themselves on the subject.”¹¹⁹ A theology of preaching indicates that preachers are called by God, responsible for people, engaged in a culture, and given a divine message. These are all impetuses for preaching. The purposes for preaching, however, lie behind these impetuses for preaching. It is the conviction of this project that not only do purposes for preaching exist, but that preachers must discover purposes for their preaching. It is those purposes that can best mature and improve preachers. The next chapter will explore implications for the history and theology of preaching as a framework for helping pastors discover purposes for preaching.

¹¹⁹ Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 541.

PART THREE
MINISTRY STRATEGY

CHAPTER 4

THE “PREACH ON PURPOSE” PLAN

The preceding theological foundation suggests several theological implications for helping preachers discover purposes for their preaching. While these implications are not yet strategic steps for preachers to take in articulating those purposes, they are theological convictions from which a plan will emerge. Following the discussion of theological implications, this project will formulate a plan that leads pastors in a specific learning setting to discover purposes for their preaching. Three theological implications drawn from the preceding biblical, historical, theological, and contextual reviews direct pastors to discover and define purposes for preaching in the present culture from within the Reformed theological tradition.

Theological Implications for Purposeful Preaching

The first theological implication of the theology of preaching is that preaching has persisted and will persist. In all its varied forms, styles, settings, and presenters, preaching has continued to impact people. The Church has always needed preaching to nurture believers' faith, to encourage faith beyond the Church among the general public, and to participate in God's mission in the world. Throughout the New Testament,

preaching is most often referred to as proclaiming, heralding, or announcing the good news of Jesus Christ. As is revealed by biblical and historical examples, preaching can be enacted in many different forms and at many historical milestones. As Edwards observes, “Most of the significant movements in the history of the church have involved preaching in their development and expansion.”¹²⁰ Preaching prompted the Early Church to grow in faith (cf. Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26; 4:8-22), preaching made faith more accessible to the general public in the High Middle Ages, and preaching clarified faith during the Reformation for the laity and the community at large. The biblical and historical witness of preaching to date suggests that the preaching will continue to persist as part of the Church’s ministry and contribute to the Church’s impact in the world.

The second theological implication is that God uses and calls people to preach. In spite of Paul’s self-proclaimed imperfection, Timothy’s timidity, or clergy’s lack of education and training in the Middle Ages, God continues to call people to preach. John Calvin and John Knox, two of the most influential Reformers of the sixteenth century, resisted God’s call to preach. Yet, when they responded to their callings to preach, they admitted that God used them to participate in God’s mission. According to a 2006 qualitative study to identify factors leading to lifelong pastoral ministry, Kimberly Schafer observes that one of three critical factors is a clear sense of call to specifically pastoral ministry.¹²¹ Likewise, the clear sense of call to preach can lead preachers to understand better and be committed to preaching. For example, Paul and Barnabas, in

¹²⁰ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 18430.

¹²¹ Kimberly L. Schafer. “Centenarian Leaders: Sustaining Factors for Life-long Effective Pastoral Leadership” (Master’s thesis, Azusa Pacific University, 2006), 50-54.

responding to God's call, pursued a new path for their ministry to preach to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:46-47).

The third theological implication is that ever-shifting cultures demand ever-adapting preachers. Based on the history of preaching, one style of preaching that is effective and relevant in one place and time is not necessarily equally effective and relevant at other places and times. Just as innovation of preaching forms and styles has continued, such innovation will continue even through the twenty-first century. When Edwards completed in 2004 his survey of preaching throughout history, he had begun to observe the innovation in preaching happening during the first few years of the twenty-first century. "But these new strategies are only emerging," Edwards observed. "They are not yet history."¹²² Edwards was not yet able to identify what the present preaching strategies would soon become, though they were beginning to develop. As culture changes, preachers and preaching change. The cultural pressures that prompt preachers to adapt, however, are only part of what defines the shape of preaching to come. Purposes for preaching also can shape how preachers adapt in faithfully communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ in their changing cultures. The ministry of preaching does not simply need innovation; rather, preaching needs purposes that guide innovation.

This project seeks to improve the preaching of Presbyterian preachers in California's southern San Joaquin by leading them to discover the theological purposes for their preaching. This quest will help preachers each respond to a question at the foundation of the preaching ministry: Why do I preach? When Childers, herself a

¹²² Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 18247.

homiletician and pastor, enlisted ten reputable scholars, pastors, and homileticians to respond to this very question, the majority admitted both the difficulty and the value of the question.¹²³ Most of these colleagues have taught homiletics and practiced preaching for decades, devoting much of their careers to discovering answers to similar questions about preaching. Still, the question of defining purposes for preaching makes one respondent feel “thrown back into this quandary [of answering]: How would I describe preaching? What *is* the purpose of preaching?”¹²⁴

Even with the challenge of identifying purposes for preaching and because of the importance to pursue purposes for preaching, the goal of this project is to give pastors the resources, insights, setting, and practice needed to discover and define purposes for their preaching. Identifying these purposes is imperative because they have the potential to launch pastors into more contextual, relevant, faithful, and effective ministry in the places where God has called them to preach. To this end, it is the preferred future of this project that as Presbyterian pastors in the southern San Joaquin Valley preach with specific theological purposes in mind, people will hear with greater clarity and respond with greater fervor to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Strategy Goals

In pursuit of Presbyterian pastors in the southern San Joaquin Valley discovering purposes for their preaching, this project establishes five goals. These goals will form the structure from which the strategy for leading these pastors to discover purposes for

¹²³ See the beginning of each chapter in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*.

¹²⁴ Lucy Lind Hogan in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 876.

preaching is designed and its effectiveness measured. Furthermore, these goals draw on the preceding theological review of the biblical, historical, theological, and contextual background of preaching.

The first goal of this project is that these Presbyterian pastors receive sufficient resources to lead them through discovering purposes for their preaching. This project gives the framework for such resources, the collection of which will be a manual entitled *Preach on Purpose*. The name *Preach on Purpose* refers both to the cohort seminar and the curriculum that seek to equip pastors to discover purposes for their preaching. The cohort seminar is a three-month peer-learning and peer-preaching commitment and the curriculum consists of speakers, learning experiences, and workbook tools. Both resources will be defined further in Chapter 5.

The second goal of this project is that pastors understand their own preaching in light of preaching in the Bible and throughout history. Parallel to the method of Part Two in this project, preachers will study and discuss the biblical record of preaching, historical milestones of preaching, and the present culture and context of preaching. Pastors will be able to state what the Bible means by “preaching,” articulate the scope of what biblical preaching is and is not, and describe how various historical periods of the Church have uniquely adapted preaching and fulfilled the task of preaching. As a result, pastors will be able to analyze better their own preaching situations and consider the most relevant and effective adaptations in light of biblical and Church history. Best achievable through individual evaluation followed by group dialogue, pastors will discuss with each other the common and unique features of their cultural contexts, challenges and opportunities

present in their ministry situations, and what they perceive is effective and ineffective in their preaching.

The third goal is that pastors discover the extent to which they can adapt their preaching. By connecting various forms, styles, personalities, and methods of preaching throughout history with the cultural changes and pressures that influenced those unique ways of preaching, pastors will conclude that preaching has adapted within numerous cultural situations. This historical review will expose participants to a wide range of preaching styles and contexts with the goal of broadening their view of how preaching can function in different times and places. Ultimately, participant pastors will brainstorm and discuss ways in which and the extents to which they can adapt their own preaching to their congregational and community contexts.

As a result of the biblical and historical content that these pastors study, the fourth goal is that preachers recapture a sense of their own callings to preach. The previous study will demonstrate that although preaching has seen varying levels of success throughout history, preaching has persisted because God calls and equips people to preach. This content is vital to pastors discovering purposes for their preaching because preaching is more than an academic exercise or a vocational task. Preaching is deeply personal. Preach on purpose intends to restore in participating pastors God's call to preach, such that whether they find their preaching conditions to be discouraging, stagnant, or flourishing, they can continue to dedicate themselves to preaching and trust that God's call transcends their circumstances. The tools produced for Preach on Purpose and the speakers presenting at the seminars will account for the variety of callings to

ministry that pastors have experienced and help them recapture the influence of those callings on their preaching ministry.

After learning about biblical and historical preaching, reviewing the adaptability of preaching, pursuing a renewed sense of God's call to preach, and analyzing preaching contexts, participating pastors will draft purposes for their preaching. Those purposes will factor in the biblical, historical, theological, and contextual situations of these pastors' preaching, as well as their own understandings of God's call to preach. As a result, each pastor's discovered purposes for preaching will likely demonstrate uniqueness. For the initial pilot cohort group of Presbyterian pastors who will all be from the southern San Joaquin Valley, they will also share many demographic, theological, and contextual similarities. As such, their purposes will likely have substantial similarity. The quality of each pastor's purposes for preaching will be measured by the preacher's faithfulness to his/her own understanding of biblical and historical preaching, sense of call, and preaching context.

Content of the Strategy

In pursuit of this project's objective and of fulfilling the five goals outlined above, a Preach on Purpose pilot peer-preaching seminar will take place, comprised of a cohort of Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley. The topics included in this seminar are described in detail below, and this is the setting in which participating pastors both independently and collaboratively discover purposes for their preaching. The various segments of this strategy and content are described below, and when particularly helpful, examples of the content are included as appendices. The most comprehensive

piece of content is the Preach on Purpose workbook, which will be the participating preacher's resource for use during the peer-preaching cohort. Portions of the resource are included in this project when necessary to illustrate specific topics outlined in this chapter.

The pilot group of pastors selected to discover purposes for preaching will gather under specific structures and guidelines. Preachers will be invited to apply and, if approved, join a three-month learning experience that includes both individual and group components. During those three months, pastors will gather for three one-day settings where they will participate in seminar presentations, small- and large-group discussions, and peer-preaching opportunities. Before the cohort begins meeting, between monthly gatherings, and after the final gathering, participating pastors will receive topics for individual reflection and study that prepare them for upcoming gatherings or encourage them to consider what they learned. An overview of the Preach on Purpose gatherings and topics is available in Appendix B.

The Preach on Purpose seminar requires several resources to operate effectively. First, a meeting location will be secured for the three monthly gatherings that is convenient for all participants and facilitates group meetings and break-out discussions. Second, part-time administrative assistance is necessary for a total of five months (one month prior to cohort, three months during cohort, and one month following cohort) to communicate with participants, prepare workbook materials, coordinate guest speakers, and organize logistics. Third, a director (who is also a preacher) will select the pilot group of pastors, establish relationships with the participants, lead the cohort gatherings, and offer guidance for further preaching growth following the cohort's completion.

Fourth, an interactive website will be designed to facilitate communication of logistics, assist in forming relationships between participants, and serve as a forum for participants to share ideas and reflections. Fifth, several guest speakers will be scheduled to lead portions of the three group gatherings. A more detailed outline of guest speakers and their topics is included in section Target Population, Format & Leadership. Sixth, financial resources are necessary to fund communication, promotion, materials production, administrative assistance, website creation, guest speaker fees, participant books and journals, and cohort gatherings expenses. The Preach on Purpose director will seek to obtain private donations and grants from denominations, non-profit religious organizations, local Christian colleges, and seminaries to fund the pilot group seminar and future seminars. It is estimated that funding of at least \$10,000 is required to successfully implement the Preach on Purpose pilot group.

In order to participate in the Preach on Purpose cohort, pastors must apply and be accepted. Given the objective of this project, participating pastors must evidence an active commitment to, cultural sensitivity toward, and interest in maturing in the ministry of preaching. Participants will be asked for personal and professional references to support their applications. Applicants will submit video examples of their preaching to help the cohort's leadership glimpse the perspective that participating preachers would bring to Preach on Purpose. A sample participant application is included in Appendix C.

As initially indicated above, the Preach on Purpose resource is the workbook that the participating preachers will receive at the first group gathering to guide them through the seminar. In order to encourage active engagement with the gatherings and colleagues, this resource will not include transcripts of presentations and teachings, nor does the

workbook replace participation in the monthly gatherings. Instead, the workbook is a tool that will prompt participants to record notes, includes reference materials and readings, and contains individual assignments and activities for the intervening weeks between cohort meetings. The leadership team will solicit feedback at the close of the pilot cohort to assist in modifying and updating the Preach on Purpose resource for future use.

Guest speakers whose ministry is particularly relevant to preaching and its purposes will present to and interact with the cohort. One speaker will attend each group gathering. The three topics on which guests will be solicited to present are Biblical and Historical Witness to Preaching (Gathering #1), Changing Context of Preaching in America (Gathering #2), and Preaching Evaluation (Gathering #3). The three primary objectives of the guest speakers are to (1) educate and inform the cohort about the planned topic, (2) inspire critical analysis, reflection, and discussion among participants about preaching, and (3) interact with the participants during and after the presentation, serving as resources to participants as they seek to discover purposes for their preaching.

The three-month cohort will employ a variety of tools for study, reflection, assessment, and evaluation. The biblical and historical study portions will utilize the Bible, Bible study resources, and primary and secondary historical preaching sources. For Biblical study, participants will explore how Paul's self-description of preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and Paul's charge to Timothy to preach in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 reveal purposes for preaching. Sections of Edward's *History of Preaching* that demonstrate the varied character of preaching throughout history will be made available to participants. Because all pilot group participants serve as pastors in the Reformed tradition, attention is given to the *Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, in particular, the

Second Helvetic Confession. Additional published resources particularly helpful for the goals of Preach on Purpose will be selected and provided free of charge to each participant during the gatherings. Participants will also analyze online demographic and census data, conduct interviews with community leaders, and discuss preaching with members of their congregations to formulate assessments of their specific cultures and contexts. During the third cohort gathering, which focuses on peer preaching and evaluation, the guest speaker will provide tools to assist the participants in how to evaluate each other's preaching in reference to purposes for preaching.

The cohort design of the Preach on Purpose seminar is intended to create an environment where relationships can develop among participants that last beyond the seminar duration. While participants interact together on three occasions and share the experience of exploring topics of enduring professional and personal value to them, co-mentoring relationships may arise. At the third cohort gathering, participants will be encouraged to continue meeting together, use the online forums developed for Preach on Purpose, and invite other pastors to join them in discussing and refining their purposes for preaching.

Target Population, Format, and Leadership

The initial Preach on Purpose cohort will operate as a pilot group. Following the three-month duration of this cohort, the leadership will solicit evaluations, analyze successes and shortcomings, and make necessary modifications for future applications of the Preach on Purposes seminar. This section gives details about the pilot group, cohort format, and leadership team.

The pilot group will be comprised of between ten and twelve Presbyterian preaching pastors in the southern San Joaquin Valley. All pastors will apply for acceptance into the cohort using the application included in Appendix C, and will be selected based on their commitment to preaching, interest in maturing in preaching, and sensitivity to their changing cultural contexts. By nature of who will be solicited for the pilot group, group members will share a Reformed theological heritage as well as common geography and demographics. Despite this similarity, there will also be diversity of denominational affiliation resulting from the network of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) churches in this area having broken apart in the past decade and churches becoming dispersed among the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), and remaining in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Although pilot group participants serve in the same overall ministry context, their immediate ministry contexts are particular. As a result, the pilot cohort will include a combination of unity and diversity.

The peer-group format of the Preach on Purpose cohort is designed intentionally to prompt enduring relationships among pastors who preach. The short-term setting in which preachers learn together creates the possibility for long-term relationships in which preachers continue learning together. The information in this Preach on Purpose cohort could be simply written and sent to preachers for their independent reading or published online and links distributed to interested preachers. By gathering pastors together to participate with their peers in a shared experience of learning about, reflecting on, and practicing preaching, the format will encourage partnerships among this group around the theme of preaching. In particular, the peer-preaching activity during the cohort's third

gathering will permit preachers to hear each other's preaching—an opportunity rare for preachers that requires their mutual vulnerability.

The Preach on Purpose leadership team consists of a director, three guest speakers, and several ministry assistants. The director of the pilot group is the originator of the ministry, Rev. Karl Schafer. A Presbyterian pastor in the southern San Joaquin Valley for eight years, Schafer believes that preaching is an essential and enduring component of the Church and is committed to maturing as a preacher himself while exploring how preaching can best adapt in light of current cultural shifts. Schafer participated in The Academy of Missional Preaching, an eighteen-month-long program sponsored by the PC(USA) that enlivened him to the value of peer-learning ministry settings and peer-preaching models for growing as a preacher. In addition, Schafer is completing a video preaching and group study collection targeting Millennials and Generation-Xers to be published in 2014. In reference to the Preach on Purpose cohort, Schafer will acquire the necessary resources, facilitate the pilot group, plan the gatherings, and direct the overall ministry. In addition to the director, who will lead portions of the gatherings, three guest speakers will speak and lead discussions about a preaching topic for which they were selected. Guest speakers will be authorities in their fields as well as practicing preachers. Several ministry assistants will communicate with attendees, prepare materials, handle logistics, and prepare the group gathering site.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTING “PREACH ON PURPOSE”

Building on the ministry plan, Chapter 5 will explain how the Preach on Purpose ministry will be implemented. Such an endeavor requires planning, recruitment, and coordination with the leaders and participants involved. All the details necessary for putting into action this cohort ministry follow in the subsequent pages, including pilot project summary, timeline, leadership team, resources, additional support, assessment, and reporting.

Pilot Project Summary

Between ten and twelve preaching pastors from Presbyterian congregations in California’s southern San Joaquin Valley will comprise the pilot group for the ministry initiative called Preach on Purpose. This size group is large enough to permit a variety of ideas and experiences, yet small enough to foster relationships between participants and ensure personal interaction. The Preach on Purpose cohort is not intended to feel like a large academic seminar or a conference, but more like a relational continuing education group. To fully enroll the pilot group, approximately sixty Presbyterian pastors in this region will receive invitations, description materials, and applications six months in

advance of the Preach on Purpose gatherings. Due to the considerable time commitment participating pastors are asked to make to Preach on Purpose, each participant will receive free of charge a set of resources—including books and journals—throughout the three-month ministry. Once applications have been submitted and reviewed and the cohort formed, participants will commit to a three-month seminar as they explore individually and together what are theological purposes for their preaching. As a result of personal reflection, collective discussions, educational presentations, and peer-preaching groups, these preachers will each receive sufficient tools to articulate in their own words purposes for preaching and practice with each other preaching that is shaped by those purposes. Because the initial Preach on Purpose cohort is a pilot group, participants will provide evaluations so that the program can be refined for future and broader application.

Timeline

Successful implementation of the pilot Preach on Purpose group begins six months prior to the initial gathering. The following discussion of a timeline will name durations prior to and following the three-month Preach on Purpose cohort so that the timeline can be applied to any timeframe, year, or setting without changing dates. Although a complete implementation schedule appears in Appendix E, several sequences are worth noting: participants, guest speakers, and logistics.

Two months is dedicated to soliciting and receiving participant applications to provide participants with sufficient time for completing applications and eventually making travel arrangements. Once the application deadline arrives, another month is given to select the participants, who will be notified of their acceptance status three

months prior to the initial gathering. Participants will receive orientation and reflection assignments and invitations to the online community prior to the cohort's first gathering. These pre-gathering tasks orient participants to the topic of purposes for preaching so that the first one-day gathering is quickly focused and effective toward the ministry's objective.

Coinciding with the request for participant applications, guest speakers will be selected and contacted for their availability to teach during the cohort for one day each. Due to the likelihood that guest speakers schedule their commitments far in advance, speakers will be finalized four months prior to the event. Guest speakers will be compensated for their travel and speaking fees.

Despite the small number of participants (between ten and twelve), the logistics for the cohort remain numerous and must be well coordinated in order to give the participants a thoroughly planned experience. Several part-time ministry assistants will share the responsibilities of communication, organization, and event hosting. These ministry assistants and the cohort director are integral to the preparation process and will meet together regularly beginning four months prior to the cohort and be retained until the cohort is complete and an evaluation meeting takes place within one month following the cohort.

While the objective of the pilot group is to help participants improve their preaching by identifying theological purposes for their preaching, the pilot group also serves as a test case for the future viability of the Preach on Purpose ministry. The feedback generated from everyone involved in the cohort—director, participants, guest speakers, ministry assistants—will shape the peer-preaching cohort ministry in later

applications. Although the extent of changes and improvements to the ministry are yet unknown, it is estimated that within three months after the cohort completes, a launch phase may begin for broader participation and expanded locations for the Preach on Purpose ministry.

Leadership Team Identification and Development

As indicated above, the implementing leadership team is essential to the success of the Preach on Purpose ministry. This team's primary task is to serve the participants and provide for an environment where they can discover theological purposes for their preaching. Members of the leadership team include the director, guest speakers, and ministry assistants. The following section outlines how these leaders will be selected. The present implementation criteria and plan applies to both the pilot group and future implementations of this ministry.

The director oversees the Preach on Purpose ministry, including the pre-cohort implementation process, the three-month cohort, and the subsequent evaluation and refinement process. For the purposes of the pilot group and the near future, the creator of the project will serve as the director.

Three guest speakers will serve as teachers and authorities in particular areas of preaching. Those three areas of instruction include: (1) biblical and historical witness to preaching, (2) the changing context of preaching in America, and (3) preaching evaluation. Guest speakers will be selected based on their knowledge of one of these fields as well as their experience with preaching. The three primary objectives of the guest speakers are to (1) educate and inform the cohort about the planned topic, (2)

inspire critical analysis, reflection, and discussion among participants about preaching, and (3) interact with the participants during and after the presentation, serving as a resource to participants as they seek to discover purposes for their preaching. The search process for guest speakers will be extensive to ensure that participants have the best resources available to help them improve in their preaching. Particularly valuable to the pilot group will be the evaluation and feedback from guest speakers about their experiences with and suggestions for improvement of the Preach on Purpose seminar.

The ministry assistants are two part-time members of the leadership team who are retained for eight months: four months prior to the cohort, three months during the cohort, and one month following the cohort. Focusing on organization, preparation, and communication, the ministry assistants ensure the logistics and details of the ministry are on schedule and completed. Ministry assistants with experience in church ministry and even familiarity with preaching will prove particularly beneficial in this role. Interns from seminaries will be strongly considered for these positions. The director will meet frequently with the ministry assistants to ensure they are adequately familiar with their responsibilities and able to respond to most any question or situation. For the purposes of the pilot group in the southern San Joaquin Valley, two ministry assistants at local churches have been identified who have worked with the director on prior occasions, and a local seminary is available to partner in Preach on Purpose by searching for interns. Ministry assistants will be compensated for their contribution to Preach on Purpose.

Resources

It will be necessary to produce or secure several resources for the successful implementation of Preach on Purpose. Ministry assistants will secure event resources, such as meeting space, meals for participants, and decorations. The director will create and compile the study resources and the ministry assistants will produce and distribute them to the participants at the appropriate time according to the schedule in Appendix E. During its meetings, the leadership team will coordinate the creation and production of these materials prior to the cohort beginning. A complete list of resources appears in Appendix F.

While most of the resources have been described in detail above, two related resources remain to be outlined. Those resources are an online community and customized video, which a retained media consultant will create uniquely for Preach on Purpose. A detailed description of the media consultant appears in the next section. The first task of this consultant—the online community forum—provides an online hub where the participants and leadership team can interact. This forum will enhance learning, facilitate collaboration, and help foster connections and relationships among participants between the three monthly gatherings. To achieve these goals, the online forum must be developed professionally and trouble-free so as to give participants a relational and intuitive experience. The second task of the media consultant is to create customized video. In addition to the other formats of teaching and learning during the cohort gatherings, video is an essential tool. Video will enhance the guest speakers' presentations by summarizing biblical and historical concepts, present visual examples of preaching, and allow participants to engage with information in a different medium.

These electronic resources will be developed in consultation with the leadership team according to the ministry schedule. The video resources will also be posted in the online community for participants to view and share at their convenience.

Additional Support Personnel

In addition to the leadership team, one support person is critical to the success of Preach on Purpose: A media consultant will support the ministry by developing the online community forum and custom video, and be available for additional media production as needed. Potential media consultants must have experience in video production, video storyboarding and storytelling, online community development, and creative visual design. The director will select the media consultant, who will be compensated, three months prior to the event.

Assessment Plan

Following the Preach on Purpose pilot group, the ministry will be evaluated, assessed, refined, and made available to wider audience. At the close of the third Preach on Purpose gathering, each participant will complete an evaluation of their learning, experience, and improvement in preaching (see Appendix D). Those evaluations will be done during the third gathering and returned to the director that day. In addition, guest speakers will complete a similar evaluation from their perspectives about the areas of improvement needed for the ministry. Given the small number of participants in the pilot group, evaluations from each pastor are necessary to amassing a thorough assessment of the ministry. Participants will also be able to send additional comments and observations

to the leadership team following the event. The director, ministry assistants, and media consultant will also complete evaluations.

The director will collect and review the evaluation forms within one week of the end of the cohort. All comments and data will be compiled and then distributed to the leadership team. Within one month after the cohort finishes, the leadership team will gather to review the evaluation feedback as well as to perform together their own postmortem assessment. This interactive assessment by the leadership team will take place during a face-to-face meeting to maximize the evaluation's potential. The outcome of this leadership team assessment will be a comprehensive, written list of refinements to the Preach on Purpose seminar and resources. Once this list is complete, the director will oversee modifying the ministry according to the agreed refinements, requesting assistance from others as needed.

Once Preach on Purpose is refined, the director will consider the possibility of the ministry expanding to broader participation and additional locations. The director will communicate with non-profit organizations, seminaries, colleges, church networks, lay training groups, publishers, and other groups committed to the ministry of preaching in the current and changing culture about how Preach on Purpose could benefit them. Those individuals and organizations who express interest will receive a summary of the ministry, its topics, the potential impact on preachers, the results of the pilot group, and opportunities for partnership. As additional groups and pastors from other theological traditions encounter Preach on Purpose, it may be necessary to tailor the ministry to other Christ-centered theological perspectives. In partnership with interested groups, the director will modify or replace any sections with more relevant material to help pastors

discover purposes for their preaching, regardless of their theological traditions. In addition, the director will ensure that the Preach on Purpose material contains the most current research, resources, and statistics when new information comes available.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The focus of this doctoral project is on pastors identifying purposes for their preaching that lead them to improve at preaching. In light of recent and momentous cultural shifts that are unseating the Church in America from its former place of influence and authority, church leaders are increasingly pressed to adapt their approaches to and perspectives on ministry. Given that worship is a defining event in churches, a priority task for pastors, and a central act of worship, preaching must also undergo its own adaptations to connect with its changing culture. This doctoral project seeks to lead Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley congregations to adapt their preaching by discovering the theological purposes for their preaching. Although resources abound to help preachers improve at sermon preparation skills and speaking techniques, the strategy proposed in this project appeals to theological convictions about preaching as a means toward improvement in preaching.

To consider the purposes of preaching is to consider why preachers preach. Just as the question has biblical, historical, theological, and contextual implications, this project pursues how to lead pastors to examine preaching from those perspectives in the present cultural situation of the American Church. The project first explores the context of preaching, from the national perspective to the local situation, finally concentrating on the network of Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley. In the past decade, this group adopted missional theology and, consequently, began transforming its ministries. While numerous innovations have taken place, preaching has yet to be considered in light of the recent cultural shifts impacting the Church in America.

This project emerged from a desire to see pastors improve and innovate their preaching so that they can best communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to America's changing culture. Part One of this project reveals the reality facing Reformed congregations in the context of California's southern San Joaquin Valley: In a post-Christian age, pastors and church leaders need to consider all ministry in light of clear theological purposes, and potentially re-invent ministries beginning with those theological purposes. Because of the importance of preaching to the Church, preaching is an opportunistic place to focus. With a firm grasp on theological convictions about preaching, pastors may be poised to preach with theological faithfulness and lasting impact in their contexts.

The project then surveys the theological and historical landscape of preaching in pursuit of a theology of preaching that targets the purposes for preaching. The combination of biblical evidence, Church history, and Reformed theology reveals that preaching has always been a prominent part of the Church. People have testified that God has compelled them through a divine calling to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The call to preach, however, is not a call to a particular preaching style. Instead, preaching has found the most success when it adapts to its culture and when preachers let themselves be shaped appropriately by their culture. The theological and historical exploration of preaching also concludes that preaching is a person-to-person activity in which people communicate the divine message of Jesus Christ to other people. Whatever form preaching has taken in any age, preaching has always been a means by which God fulfills God's mission in the world through people preaching to people.

The biblical and historical quest for a theology of preaching in Part Two reveals that pastors and theologians have rarely articulated purposes for preaching and,

furthermore, those purposes often remain elusive. Answering the question, “What is the purpose of preaching?” continues to challenge notable homileticians and preachers of the twenty-first century.¹²⁵ The majority opinion, however, is that there is no single purpose for preaching that preachers must discover; instead, multiple purposes for preaching surface as preachers assess their faith, the Bible, ministry heritage, cultural situation, and preaching context. Because of the importance of preaching and the investment required to realize its purposes, this project seeks to lead preachers in discovering the theological purposes for their preaching. The anticipated result and preferred future is that as Presbyterian pastors in California’s southern San Joaquin Valley preach with specific theological purposes in mind, people will hear with greater clarity and respond with greater fervor to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Based on this goal, Part Three of this project details a strategy aimed at helping pastors discover those purposes for their preaching. Committed and culturally sensitive pastors from California’s southern San Joaquin Valley Presbyterian congregations will be invited to participate in a pilot peer-learning and peer-preaching group for three months. Participants will learn together about their common biblical, historical, theological, and contextual approaches to preaching while observing their specific differences. Named Preach on Purpose, this ministry seminar will follow the structure outlined in Appendix B. Three theological implications about preaching stated in Chapter 4 that shape the Preach on Purpose ministry are that (1) preaching has persisted and will persist, (2) God uses and calls people to preach, and (3) ever-shifting cultures demand ever-adapting

¹²⁵ See the variety of perspectives collected by Childers in *The Purpose of Preaching*.

preaching. As a result of the seminar instruction, guided discussion, and individual reflection, participating preachers will be equipped to discover and define the theological purposes for their preaching. Preachers will then craft a sermon with those purposes in mind and preach to their peers in the group. Pilot group participants and members of the leadership team will complete evaluations that will assist the leadership team in refining the ministry. This pilot peer-preaching experience and the ensuing evaluations will then inform more widespread future applications of the Preach on Purpose strategy.

Preach on Purpose is intended to compliment other ministries and training programs that equip pastors to preach. Numerous valuable methods for training preachers how to preach exist and target various aspects of preaching improvement. The intent of the present Preach on Purpose strategy is to fill a perceived gap in the current preaching resources and equip Presbyterian pastors in California's southern San Joaquin Valley with the best tools for preaching in the current American cultural context. If Preach on Purpose proves helpful to the pilot group, the leadership team will explore further how Preach on Purpose can combine with other strategies that equip pastors to preach.

In order for the Preach on Purpose cohort and resource to thrive, several areas remain for further exploration. First, the ever-changing American culture requires that this project and its leaders continually assess the American culture and its impact on the Church. Discoveries about cultural trends are often quickly outdated, requiring ongoing assessment. To the extent that the Preach on Purpose seminar seeks to equip preachers for ministry in their changing contexts, Preach on Purpose also needs to incorporate the most current observations about cultural changes and how churches and preachers are addressing those changes. Continued study into the emerging trends of new generations

and conversations with other church leaders will ensure that the principles of Preach on Purpose are not limited to the early twenty-first century, but continually adapt to the changing cultural and ministry landscape.

A second area for continued exploration is preaching itself. Edward's historical survey of preaching indicates that any new style of preaching will soon be replaced by yet another new style of preaching.¹²⁶ Preaching, in other words, is a dynamic and adaptive ministry. In order to supply preachers with a thorough survey of preaching in the present cultural context, Preach on Purpose must assess and integrate the newest trends, styles, initiatives, and practices in preaching. By following emerging preachers, remaining connected with homileticians and preaching educators, and witnessing preaching in various American church contexts, Preach on Purpose will remain abreast of the evolving landscape of preaching.

A third area to explore further is the pastor's role in preaching. Broad trends in preaching show that pastors became increasingly specialized as preachers in the Middle Ages, developing the craft of preaching into a certain, defined task requiring particular types of education, certification, and training. The Reformation emphasized the accessibility of the gospel to the public as the Bible was translated into numerous vernaculars and education flourished. Yet, preaching has only become increasingly specialized in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, even to the point of becoming professionalized. Contemporary Baptist preacher and author John Piper confronts this tendency: "We pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral

¹²⁶ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 18222.

ministry . . . Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry.”¹²⁷ Piper argues that a pastor’s heart for ministry will make a more effective pastor than education, techniques, and skills alone. This trend of professionalizing aspects of ministry—including preaching—is what Pagitt has been attempting to change in his appeal to “progressional dialogue” as a more spiritually forming way of preaching. Pagitt’s concept of preaching reduces the assumption that preaching is the pastor’s job and brings preaching into the community of the congregation. Closely related is the previous observation that the responsibility of preaching in the Bible went to many people, most of whom did not meet the educational and ordination requirements that today’s churches have established. Because this doctoral project targets how preaching can best adapt to contexts based on theological purposes for preaching, current and reigning presumptions about the pastor’s role in preaching must be assessed and considered further.

A fourth area of exploration concerns expanding the Preach on Purpose ministry: How can other Reformed denominations, non-Reformed denominations, and independent congregations benefit from the seminar? The distinctive angle of Reformed theology leads to certain conclusions about preaching, such as its liturgical prominence and function in a church’s overall ministry. Other denominations and groups, however, perceive preaching with varying levels of liturgical importance and theological priority. As the Preach on Purpose strategy is refined and offered to additional groups, it will be helpful to test and investigate how the resources could be tailored to relate other faith

¹²⁷ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013), 1.

traditions. Additional pilot groups may prove helpful in this area, and this option will be considered during the evaluation phase of the initial Preach on Purpose pilot group.

A fifth area needing further study is the geographical relevance of the Preach on Purpose strategy. This project is intentionally limited to the American Church context and even more narrowly to the prescribed network of Presbyterian pastors in the southern San Joaquin Valley. After the pilot group finishes, research into additional locations within and beyond the United States will be beneficial. Through study into Church history as well as discussions with church leaders in other locations, conclusions could be made about the viability of applying this ministry model to additional geographical contexts and needed changes in order to ensure its accessibility.

Preaching has been formative in the history of the Church. As Alan of Lille's first formal definition of preaching indicates, preaching is for "the forming of [persons]."¹²⁸ A vast amount of sermons have been preserved throughout history and centuries of resources exist that are dedicated to helping preachers preach. The responsibility assigned to preaching looms large. Purposes for preaching, however, remain largely unnamed. This void of guidance requires that preachers persistently pursue the purposes for their preaching. It is the aim of this project to contribute to the ongoing quest for purposes for preaching so that those who preach might fulfill their callings faithfully and communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly. As a result, pastors may be better equipped to fulfill the Apostle Paul's hope that people's faith "would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor 2:1-5).

¹²⁸ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 4316.

APPENDIX A

CULTURAL NAVIGATION FRAMEWORK			
CULTURAL SHIFT #1	People	Authority	Language
Modernity <i>Tends to control society</i>	Individualism – The individual and each of our ideas are autonomous. We need no outside influence to know, succeed, and understand.	Foundationalism – Knowledge comes from certain indisputable foundations about which everyone agrees. Science is the most well-known.	Representational Language – Language represents specific things to which everyone agrees. There is common understanding about things we talk about.
Post-Modernity <i>Tends to reject society</i>	De-Center the Subject – The individual person is not the ultimate center of society. We need other people to understand how life works and how to navigate life.	Personal Narrative – There are no collective stories that define life for everyone (meta-narratives) and to which everyone agrees; personal narratives reign.	Language Creates Reality – As language is spoken, things begin to happen. Each person's language needs the language of others. Common language.
CULTURAL SHIFT #2			
Local <i>Tends to limit</i>	Sufficiency – People see themselves as autonomous, capable and influential in the sphere that they know and in which they operate.	Handle on Knowledge – Knowledge is available and attainable. Education is for disseminating information. People are in control of info.	Language is Technical – Words describe what is known and what is present and visible. Words are more logical and technical.
Global <i>Tends to expand</i>	Dependent & Participatory – The interconnected and vast world makes people value people. Diversity is prized. People are one in many.	Open-Ended – Learning is a complex enterprise that requires a lifelong commitment. Other people in other places are essential. Learning is never done.	Language Inspires Imagination – Words create possibilities and evoke imagination. Language inspires and motivates.
CULTURAL SHIFT #3			
Christendom <i>Christianity in modernity</i>	Attractional – Presumes the church's goal is to cater to individual preferences and bring people to the church. The individual (audience) drives the gospel.	Positional – The church presumes it has automatic power (and does have some power) in its culture simply because it is the church. People respect the church.	Universal Language – Presumes that everyone universally speaks the same language and understands the church's language when it expresses faith and Christ.
Post-Christendom <i>Christianity in post-modernity</i>	Post-Attractional – The church is defined not by bringing people to it, but by going to people. Individual preferences are trivial.	Post-Positional – The church does not have automatic power and authority in the world and has no externally-attributed authority.	Post-Universal Language – There is no universal language that the church and culture understand. The church's language is foreign to culture.
CULTURAL SHIFT #4			
Agrarian Age → Industrial Age → Information Age <i>Tends to inform</i>	Mechanistic – People are part of a greater system of production and mechanics that makes things possible.	Technical – Learning happened in institutions and helped reach goals (job, skills).	Language Defines – Language is a tool that helps people understand concepts and the world.
Inventive Age <i>Tends to inspire</i>	Creators – People are inventors who conceive of and reach new possibilities. People inspire people.	Creative – Knowledge inspires and excites new possibilities. Learning is everywhere.	Language Creates – Words inspire and create new ways of seeing the world and God's creation.
RESPONSES TO CULTURAL AND CHURCH SHIFTS			
Missional Response <i>Tends to subvert society</i>	Incarnational – To achieve the post-Christendom reaction, posturing ourselves incarnationally is how the church can be the church.	Power in Humility – Rather than demanding or assuming authority, the church approaches culture with humility and vulnerability.	Language of Witness – Since language is no longer sufficient to communicate the gospel, our way of life (witness) is how we communicate the gospel.
Theological Response <i>Tends to engage society</i>	Missio Dei – The mission of God is something larger than ourselves to which we submit ourselves.	Incarnational – Rather than imbued power and authority, incarnational activity is the church's approach.	Witness – Language makes sense as we actively witness. Witness (not language) better communicates, proves truth.

APPENDIX B

Preach on Purpose - Overview

DESCRIPTION – A gathering of preachers who pursue together the theological purposes for their preaching. Pastors will commit to weekly individual study and reflection as well as monthly group discussions and seminars over a three-month period.

SEQUENCE OF TOPICS & GATHERINGS

Individual Preparation

- Reflect on what preaching is and why you do it
- Draft a personal preaching profile

Gathering #1

- Biblical Witness of Preaching
- Historical Witness of Preaching
- Why Preachers Have Preached
- Why Preachers Still Preach
- Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Individual Study & Reflection

- Reflect (journal or blog) on the biblical and historical witness of preaching
- Reflect (journal or blog) on your unique call to preach

Gathering #2

- Review Biblical and Historical Witness of Preaching
- Discuss reflections on personal calling preach
- Bible Study on 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- Adaptability of Preaching
- Changing Context of Preaching in America
- Compare and discuss shared and unique preaching contexts

Individual Study & Reflection

- Draft purposes for preaching
- Prepare a sermon and let your purposes for preaching shape the sermon

Gathering #3

- Preach prepared sermon in peer-preaching setting
- Share and evaluate purposes for preaching
- Identify next steps

Individual Next Steps

- Fulfill next steps for preaching
- Meet with mentor(s)

APPENDIX C

Preach on Purpose - Application

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Preach on purpose cohort. This ministry enrichment program requires a commitment of three months, including weekly reflections and study as well as three full-day group meetings. Please complete the following application and return it and the requested materials by ____ [deadline] ____ to be considered for Preach on purpose.

NAME _____

CHURCH _____

POSITION / TITLE _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Please describe your preaching responsibilities.

Why are you interested in participating in *Preach on Purpose*?

What resources have been most helpful to you in improving as a preacher?

Please attach the following additional resources:

- 1 ministry/professional reference letter and 1 personal reference letter
- Complete resume, including ministry experience and education
- A DVD of a recent sermon or a link to a recent sermon online

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX D

Preach on Purpose – Participant Evaluation

Thank you for participating with *Preach on Purpose*! We hope that you were able to discover purposes for your preaching and improve in your practice of preaching. Please complete the following evaluation to assist us in improving *Preach on Purpose* for pastors in the future.

1. To what extent have you improved as a preacher during *Preach on Purpose*?

very little

very much

1-----10

2. The objective of *Preach on Purpose* is to lead pastors to improve at preaching by guiding them to discover the purposes for their preaching. Do you believe this goal was achieved? Why or why not?

3. What were the three most beneficial segments, topics or activities?

1.

2.

3.

4. What was unnecessary during *Preach on purpose*?

5. What was missing from *Preach on Purpose*?

6. Who do you think would benefit most from *Preach on Purpose* in the future?

APPENDIX E

Preach on Purpose – Implementation Schedule

6 MONTHS PRIOR

- Promote Preach on Purpose and solicit participant applications
- Communicate with potential guest speakers
- Search for viable cohort gathering space
- Begin receiving participant applications
- Secure ministry assistants for communication, hosting and logistics

4 MONTHS PRIOR

- Finalize guest speakers
- Finalize cohort gathering space
- Close participant applications
- Meet with ministry assistants

3 MONTHS PRIOR

- Confirm guest speakers
- Select final group of cohort participants and send welcome information
- Meet with ministry assistants

1 MONTH PRIOR

- Confirm cohort gathering space
- Send cohort participants pre-gathering information
- Invite cohort participants to online community
- Meet with ministry assistants

1 WEEK PRIOR

- Email reminder to participants about Gathering #1 and pre-gathering tasks
- Print workbooks and additional participant materials
- Finalize hosting details for Gathering #1
- Meet with ministry assistants

1 MONTH FOLLOWING

- Compile participant evaluation feedback
- Request evaluations from guest speakers
- Meet with ministry assistants to perform verbal evaluation
- Compile comprehensive list of ministry refinements

3 MONTHS FOLLOWING

- Strategize for further and broader application of ministry
- Implement plan for wider application of ministry

APPENDIX F

Preach on Purpose – Resource List

The following table details the tangible resources necessary for the *Preach on Purpose* seminar and who is responsible for those resources.

Resource	Resource Creator	Resource Producer
Preach on Purpose Workbook	Director	Ministry Assistant
Participant Invitation Letter	Director	Director
Participant Application	Director	Director
Request for Guest Speaker	Director	Director
Online Community	Director/Ministry Assistants	Media Consultant
Meeting Space for Gatherings	N/A	Ministry Assistant
Hosting and Event Details	N/A	Ministry Assistant
Customized Video	Director	Media Consultant
Pre-Gathering Materials	Director	Ministry Assistant
Evaluation Form	Director	Ministry Assistant
Refinements List	Director	Director
Partnership Inquiry, Ministry Summary & Promotional Materials	Director	Ministry Assistant

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